

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

IN THE LAND OF THE LION AND SUN.

Being an account of fifteen years' residence in Persia, 1866-1881, by
C. J. WILLS, M.D., late one of the medical officers of H.M.'s
Telegraph Department in Persia. Demy 8vo. 14s.

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“Dr. Wills’s instructive volume.”—*Encyclopædia Britannica*.

PERSIA AS IT IS.

PERSIA AS IT IS

BEING

SKETCHES OF MODERN PERSIAN LIFE
AND CHARACTER

BY

C. J. WILLS, M.D.,

FOR MANY YEARS ONE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HER MAJESTY'S
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AUTHOR OF

“IN THE LAND OF THE LION AND SUN; OR,
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TO
COL. SIR JOHN BATEMAN-CHAMPAIN, R.E., K.C.M.G.,
DIRECTOR-IN-CHIEF,
INDO-EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT,
AND TO
MY MANY KIND FRIENDS (AND CRITICS) IN PERSIA, EUROPEAN AND NATIVE,
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR;
AS
A SOUVENIR
OF MANY PLEASANT YEARS SPENT IN
THE EAST.



PREFACE.

THE very cordial reception given to a previous work on Persia,* giving a systematic description of the country as seen by me, of my journeys to and through Persia, and of my long residence in that country, has induced me to produce various sketches of modern Persian life and character under the present title of 'Persia As It Is.' Living as I did as a doctor in large practice in the heart of Persia, I shall perhaps not be considered presumptuous in having an opinion on this particular subject.

The present volume records many of the most interesting and curious phases of Persian life. Most sojourners in the East rarely penetrate the veil which hides one-half of the population; the fact of my being a hakim (or physician) gave me the opportunity of doing so. I may have been a Goosha-nisheen, or "dweller in a corner," but my eyes have been ever open to see, not only the nakedness of the land, but

* 'In the Land of the Lion and Sun, or Modern Persia.'

also the large measure of good, and the many pleasant memories that deserve to be recorded.

I have resorted to the form of short stories in a few cases where, from the nature of the subject, narrative might be more interesting, or less dry, than a mere sketch.

I trust that the reader will excuse the shortcomings of the account of details of life passed in a little-known country. I have endeavoured to speak of Persia *as it is*, and *as I saw it*.

“Good wine needs no bush,” but as the wine-seller always did have a bush, whatever the quality of his wine, so this book must have a preface.

Persia is the land of procrastination, the principle of the Irani being “never do to-day what can be put off till to-morrow.” Thus the doing of anything is always referred to “Furder inshallah” (Please God, to-morrow). Reader, if you get through ‘Persia As It Is,’ and are displeased, pray defer the pouring forth of the vials till that indefinite time “Furder.”

As to the spelling and transliteration of Persian words used, it is not classical: it does not pretend to be; but it will convey to the *ordinary* reader the *local* pronunciation of the colloquial. Thus moonshee is used for mūnshi, as that spelling gives the exact sound. I think that all that is required is, that the *ordinary* reader shall not pronounce the words too incorrectly, and that it is only when a work is philological that

accuracy in transliteration is of any real importance. With this end in view I have tried so to spell Persian words, that by following ordinary rules the general reader may not be very wide of the mark. To avoid continual explanation, I have added a glossary with a correct transliteration.

I have to thank the proprietors of *The World*, *The St. James's Gazette*, *The Globe*, and Messrs. Chambers for permission to reproduce some of these sketches.

C. J. WILLS.

ORIENTAL CLUB,
HANOVER SQUARE, W. '



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PERSIA AS IT IS.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A new Playground—How to get there—Bakū—Persia—Its delights—Things worth seeing—Deserts—Teheran and its sights—Travelling: various modes and cheapness of—Intention of Author.

WE are ever in search of new playgrounds. As soon as some charming nook is discovered, the enthusiastic finder confides his *trouvaille* to a few of his acquaintances. Some one writes a book. There is a rush of tourists. Then farewell to solitude, to innocent village landlords. Up spring hotels, like gigantic mushrooms; and succeeding crowds of tourists and their camp-followers rob the place of all the freshness of its charms.

But there is yet a playground almost untrodden by the tourist's foot: a land where hotels are not—or where, at any rate, there is but one; a land where the Eastern caravanserai opens its hospitable doors to every man, rich or poor; a land where one can travel

en prince, or “pad the hoof,” and live decently on ninepence a day; a country to all intents and purposes the Far East, yet touching Europe; a country interesting to the botanist and naturalist, for its verdant soil teems with animal life, its streams are full of fish innocent of the arts of the angler; a country of magnificent forests, abounding with game, large and small—pheasants, partridges, wild duck, snipe, bears, wild sheep, antelope, panthers, tigers—aye, and lions; a country where a serviceable horse is to be had for a £10 note, and where feed never exceeds sixpence a day. As for climate, perfection.

This is not a mere land of dreams—it is northern Persia. Here peace reigns, the roads are safe, crimes of violence are unknown, the people are timid and tranquil. London to Berlin, a day and a-half; Berlin to Enzelli on the Caspian, ten days; total, eleven days and a-half. And this eleven-and-a-half days of travel is very varied. From Berlin to Wilna (well worth a halt); thence to Eydtkhunen; and then Russia—dear old dirty Russia—where they may be rough, but where they are so kind and hospitable, charging nothing for the children on rail or boat. Orel—Griazi—Tzaritzin. Then the river-steamer, with its good living, its *zakouskas* or snacks, its vodka, and its *piver* or Russian beer, and *fresh* caviare à discrétion. It is almost worth the journey to eat fresh caviare, to say nothing of sterlet. Then Astrakhan and the Caspian Sea. And here good-bye civilization; good-bye tall hats and varnished boots; good-bye to female society; good-bye to Europe and European civilization, but not to civilization of another kind, and hospitality of a more than even

Russian excellence. A few hours' halt is made at Derbend. This is an Asiatic, not a European town, in fact. On to Bakū—a halt of two days; you land to ride to the Eternal Fires, and to marvel at the streets watered with naphtha-water. Just outside the town you scratch the earth, apply a match, and, lo, a flame! The surface of the sea may in some spots be ignited. The place is greasy with naphtha; the rouble notes smell of it. Bakū, since it “struck ile,” has become very rich. The inhabitants seem to do little else but talk of naphtha, play at cards, and drink champagne.

On the twelfth day, having passed thickly-wooded Lenkoran, you arrive at your destination. The Shah's tower, with its bright colours, looms into sight like a fairy pagoda. The orange-groves of Enzelli run down to the water's edge. The blue cloudless sky hangs over an earthly paradise; while the distant dim blue mountains, capped in places with snow, tower above the dark and many-shaded greens of the dense forests. This is Persia: the land whose customs never change; the land of Hadji Baba; the land where a despot rules patriarchally, where almost all religions are tolerated; and, be it not forgotten, where a pound goes further than anywhere else.

Here, then, is the country for the sportsman, the botanist, the entomologist, and the artist. Also, here is change, novelty, freedom from restraint. Here is the place for the dreamer of dreams and the smoker of pipes. For the Persian water-pipe or hubble-bubble is the poetry of smoking, and a pound of the best Shiraz tobacco costs sixpence.

The bric-à-brac hunter will go on to Teheran or

Ispahan. The antiquarian or archæologist will proceed to Rhé, the ancient Rhages—to the tomb of Cyrus, to the statue of Shahpūr; he will visit Persepolis and the tombs of the Kings, or he will cross to Hamadan and see the ruins of Ecbatana, Shushan the palace, and the tombs of Esther and Mordecai. Thence he will go on to Kermanshah, and visit Besitūn for the sake of the rock sculptures of Darius the Mede, with the temple of Diana on the way. Returning home, viâ Baghdad, he will ponder over what was once the Tower of Babel. As for the man who journeys for change of scene, a few stages will take him out of the fertile belt near the Caspian Sea, and, after traversing many mountain passes and rocky river gorges, he enters a howling desert, leaving the dense forests and plains of pasture. Not a tree, no water, an arid plain, high mountains on all sides, and inhabitants none or next to none.

In the capital Europeans are few, and the gorgeous magnificence of the Shah and his Court is somewhat oppressive. Veiled beauties with their eunuchs are in evidence; the crowded bazaars, the loaded camels, mules, horses, and asses, all as in the picture-books. The prodigality of dress and of ornament, and the habitual use of the precious metals, astonish the untravelled and even the travelled European. Here men are bastinadoed and blown from guns in true Eastern manner. The Jew is persecuted by the Mussulman. Wine and spirits are forbidden; but the Court and the lower classes in the capital indulge in hearty libations. The dervish in his tall hat and leopard-skin stalks the streets with his club or huge axe, or stops you and

asks for alms stark-naked. The palaces and country seats of the King and his nobles are open to all. Even the royal jewels, the Deryar-i-Nur, or Sea of Light, the great diamond ; the pigeon's-egg pearls ; the coffee-cup hollowed from a huge turquoise ; the ruby ring—hoop collet and all, carved from one stone ; the heaps and strings of royal gems : all these will be shown to the inquiring foreigner.

In Persia the traveller may go royally with a string of mules, tents, horses, and even carriages if he will, with his cooks and kitchen and every kind of comfort. He may march less ambitiously, taking his chairs and bedding, his brace of servants, his cook and groom, for about thirty shillings a day, and ride his own horse into the bargain. Or he may post with or without a servant and a guide, tearing along at the rate of eight miles an hour, including stoppages, for twopence-half-penny a mile each horse, and a couple of shillings for food per diem. Or he may even make a walking tour of it, marching his twenty to twenty-eight miles a day with a caravan ; when, if he be economical, his expenses will be covered by tenpence a day. He may cross Persia to the Persian Gulf on mule-back in a month for £3 10s. mule-hire, or for half that sum if he has a friend who will ride and tie. The Anglo-Indian in search of "change" may ride post across Persia from Bushire, in the Gulf, to Enzelli, on the Caspian, in nine to ten days, if he be a determined rider, at a cost of some £11 for one horse ; if he take a guide, then about £20.

And what can be more enjoyable than a ride at full speed on a succession of small but game horses in hard training across an unknown country, carrying one's

food, clothes, and bedding—with a fresh horse every twenty miles? There are two ways of posting, or riding *châr pâ*: going when there is light, and going on as long as horses can be had day and night. The lazy man can canter his first stage at dawn, get over his second by ten or eleven, breakfast, smoke and sleep till four, and then ride one or more stages at his own sweet will. This is the luxury of posting, the truly enjoyable way of seeing a country: variety of scenery, variety of horses: a poor lodging at night, perhaps, but you are too tired to complain. The great towns—Teheran, Ispahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Hamadan—can be superficially done in a few days; and the real Oriental bath, the hammam, can be got in perfection at each of them. The new playground is revealed; it is yet comparatively unvisited, and it is too far off ever to become vulgar. All these various visitors who may come, *and come they will*, will not see Persia as it is. The following chapters will lift the veil, and show them many things that they can never expect themselves to actually behold; but these things the author saw, and now is going to do his best to describe.





CHAPTER II.

THE SHAH OF PERSIA.

Escape from Assassins—Their cruel Punishment—Shah's appearance—Dress—Red-tailed horses—Royal carriages—Habits of life—Shampooing—Amusements of Shah—Dislike to bloodshed—The sticks, or bastinado—Royal meals—Court dignitaries—Corruption—The Harem—Visit of Shah to Europe—Practical jokes of Shah—Cast-off Wives—Legitimate Wives—Anys-u-dowlet.

PROBABLY the most restless man on the face of the earth is Nussir-u-deen, Shah of Persia, Asylum of the Universe, and King of Kings. These two titles, as seriously given to the absolute monarch of Persia as we apply the more modest term Majesty, are not inappropriate, for from the Royal fiat there is no appeal. Almost immediately on his accession the Shah had the good fortune to escape a determined attempt at assassination, made on him by a band of fanatics of the Baabi sect. These men, Communists in the vilest sense of the term, under the exciting influence of persecution, made a bold and nearly successful attack on the life of the Persian monarch. It was happily frustrated, and it is needless to add that the unfortunate fanatics were cruelly put to death. The various heads of the Government departments petitioned for,

and obtained, the privilege of ending their sufferings ; and thus the great noblemen of the kingdom put the poor wretches out of their misery in the public square, by sword, dagger, or pistol. This near escape from death has caused his Majesty Nussir-u-Deen to change his abode with curious frequency. He still dreads the knife of the fanatic. Another reason for the frequent and sudden movements of the Shah is his intense devotion to the chase. When hunting and shooting—and here be it remarked that his Majesty is a first-rate shot with the rifle—the King of Persia is happy ; and, in fact, the nomadic existence of his ancestors is almost necessary to him. Swarthier than most of his subjects, of middle height, his appearance is so well known, since his visits to Europe, that it hardly needs description. Very short-sighted, he is seldom without his spectacles, and until he opens his mouth he gives rather the idea of a mild Hindu. But when he speaks in his loud and imperious way, all idea of mildness disappears. The loud tone, however, is more the effect of constant habits of command ; and the custom of addressing his Majesty in a low tone, that is observed on all occasions, probably tends to make it the more noticeable by contrast. Although the King of Persia has a larger collection of jewels than any other monarch—save on state occasions, such as the public salaam of the new year, he very seldom displays any of them. He is strikingly plain in his dress. The full-skirted frock-coat of black cloth, or at times of finest cashmere shawl, which in winter-time is lined and trimmed with priceless fur, is his usual wear ; but the colours are generally dark.

In the capital the Shah may frequently be seen on

horseback, and, like all Persian gentlemen, he rides well; his horses, with long and uncut tails, dyed crimson for some six inches at their tips (the jealously-guarded privilege of the King and his sons), are distinguished by their value and beauty. Here, too, the Shah's quiet taste is apparent in the sombre materials of his saddlery, though of course each spirited charger has its pure gold or jewelled necklet and trappings, and these barbaric ornaments certainly do not detract from its appearance. Riding alone, his eyes generally on the ground, his Majesty still maintains a staff of some dozen Royal running footmen, who, clad in his state livery of scarlet and gold, and wearing the turreted hats of other days, with their jingling ornaments, and each armed with his silver staff of office, hover round the Shah, while one remains at his stirrup to indicate the Royal pleasure. Behind come one or two of the Ministers, then pell-mell the throng of mounted courtiers, secretaries, officials, and their hangers-on, while the Royal body-guard of irregulars, each with his gun slung in a scarlet cloth case across his back, mix promiscuously among the miscellaneous crowd of one to two hundred horsemen, without whom the Shah is hardly ever seen. The Royal carriage most in vogue with his Majesty bears a suspicious likeness to one of our sheriffs' vehicles; eight horses are harnessed to it, the pairs being ridden by four postillions in scarlet. As a rule the King is alone, the only exceptions being when accompanied by one of his sons or the Prime Minister, or perhaps some religious magnate. Erratic as he is in his movements, passing from one suburban palace to another, the Royal route may generally be ascertained by observing the water-

carriers, who carefully sprinkle the road the King will use. Nor is this a needless form round Teheran, as the ordinary state of the roads, if they may be dignified with that title, is similar to the dustiest of Derbies.

The King of Persia is very careful of his health, and his French physician, Dr. Tholozan, is ever within call, so that the unfortunate doctor is as great a gadabout as his master, the Asylum of the Universe. His Majesty enjoys very fair health, a slight paralysis having as yet been his only ailment. His habits of life are simple, his diet plain roasts and boiled. If he ever indulges in the pottle-deep potations of his predecessors on the Persian throne, it can only be in the recesses of his *anderūn* or harem. There is no outward sign of any such indiscretion. The King is an early riser, four or five A.M. being his usual time in summer. This gives him a long day, but he breaks it by a siesta. It is the Royal habit when tired to be shampooed by his attendants, and it is thought no indignity for a high official to be told to assist in the kneading process. Of the delights of shampooing, Europeans, as a rule, have no idea. It is a real art, and it is carried out to scientific perfection by some of his Majesty's more confidential servants. The chief barber is a man high in office, and he is supposed to be the most proficient in the science. Some of the inhabitants of the Royal *anderūn*, however, have acquired such a celebrity for their skill in this delicate art as to obtain wealth, rank, and even titles of honour. One of the Royal pleasures is music; the King has several bands, trained by his bandmaster, a Frenchman, M. Lemaire. These bands are fairly good, if rather noisy. M. Lemaire, however, also is an excellent flautist; the flute is the favourite

instrument of all Persians in their moments of ease, and the King is no exception. The playing of the *fute* and the recitation of poetry in the East are supposed to be conducive to sleep. The Shah is usually read to sleep, and as a rule shampooing goes on concurrently with the reading, both ceasing gradually as his Majesty drops off. Besides hunting the big game, which he strictly preserves, the King amuses himself with shooting at a mark, chess, and the reviewing of his troops. His three so-called Cossack regiments are his latest toy. The inner life and gossip of his capital greatly interest him, and each morning the chief of the police makes his confidential, and at times scandalous, report. Nor is justice at all times slow in Persia. It is administered often in a rough-and-ready fashion, and to the terror of evildoers. The King himself is very averse to the shedding of blood, and has abolished the old custom of the monarch's presiding at capital punishments. Still, capital punishments for quasi-political crimes, such as the non-payment of revenue, are not uncommon; and the bowstring and the poisoned cup are no mere nominal terrors. The *bastinado* flourishes; in fact, without it the Persians declare that chaos would come again. A defaulting debtor—sticks; a thief, an ignoramus, a highway robber, a drunkard, a provincial governor behindhand with his revenue—the punishment for all these faults and crimes, irrespective of age, rank, or sex, is sticks, and nothing but sticks, varying in quantity perhaps, but seldom differing in quality; for unless the patient can bribe the executioner, they are invariably well laid on. After all, the Persians do not look upon it as an indignity; it is painful, that is all, and so to be avoided

as long as possible. A Persian laughs at the idea of doing without the sticks. And the King never stirs without several gentlemen in red coats (executioners) and an ominous band of burly ruffians termed *farrashes*, or *carpet-spreaders*, each carrying a good switchy stick from four to six feet long. These, to keep their hands in, they invariably ply upon the backs and legs of a good-humoured and grinning crowd; but when used in earnest it is another matter, and the shrieks of the victim soon attest the reality of the punishment.

At twelve o'clock the Royal breakfast is served. It is a solitary meal. The King is squatting on the ground; some fifty dishes are set before him. His Majesty selects the simplest, and quenches his thirst with buttermilk or iced sherbets, which are served in delicious profusion in magnificent china bowls. Dead silence is observed by the few favoured courtiers who stand around the walls of the apartments. The Royal butlers silently hand the various dishes. As the King eats he addresses those whom he may deign to honour with his notice, and these fortunate ones bow low, and answer in humble affirmatives, "May I be your sacrifice, Asylum of the Universe. So it is." "It happened exactly as your Majesty ordained;" and so on. The same kind of language is used by the Royal Princes in addressing their father, and they would not presume to attempt to sit in the Royal presence; but as in Persia no son would sit in his father's presence unless ordered to do so, this is more due to filial respect than the awe of majesty. The King rinses his mouth and wipes his hands over a golden bowl, and then he rises and the meal is served to the princes. On leaving them it goes to the courtiers, and lastly the Royal *farrashes* pick the

bones, and literally lick the platters clean. The Royal dinner, served about 9 P.M., is a repetition of the breakfast; generally it is enlivened by the playing of the brass bands, or by the music of the native musicians attached to the Court. The dignitaries of the Court are numerous, and consist of the Lord Chamberlain, the chief carpet-spreader, the chief executioner, the lord high treasurer, the chief huntsman, the Prime Minister, and the head of the Foreign Office. Then come the minor dignitaries: the chief of the guard, the chief doctor, the chief barber, the chief of the telegraphs, the master of the horse, the Court poet, and the Court painter are not wanting. All these officers are salaried, and every Royal servant has his privileges of oppressing his subordinates and of extorting from outsiders. Often salaries are not paid, or are forfeited, or presents far exceeding their amount are made to the Shah himself or his Ministers. But every man, from the Prime Minister downwards, has his legitimate perquisites, his lawful peculations—in fact, the *modakel* (or *dustoorie* as it is called in India) assigned to his position. Of everything that passes through his hands something sticks, and the larger his affairs the bigger his profits. In Persia everything is sold—governorships, judgeships, religious offices, places of every kind, official protection, all. The great officials are as corrupt as Bacon, but they are not detected, or if detected, know how to buy safety.

Dinner over, the Shah, as a rule, though with frequent exceptions, retires to the mysterious precincts of his *anderūn* or women's quarters. Without indiscretion, it may be noted that the denizens of the Royal *anderūn*, who are under the care of the *koja bashi* or

chief eunuch and his fellows, are about three hundred ; that of these three hundred many are children, and two hundred at least are simply servants, a large number being negresses. Each office of the Persian Court has its corresponding dignity in the *anderūn*. Few additions have been made of late years to the number of inmates of the Royal *seraglio*. It contains absolutely no Europeans, no male persons over the age of eleven. Each Royal favourite has her separate pavilion and her staff of servants, her equipages, her jewels, and her revenue. The principal favourite generally has some high-sounding title conferred upon her, such as "The Delight of the State." The ladies are never seen abroad unveiled, save one or two of the handsomer or more flighty of their number, who sometimes, when driving in their "glass coaches," purposely give a rather liberal display of florid charms to passers-by in carriages or on horseback. The legends of tattooed Greek princes notwithstanding, it is quite certain that as a rule no man save the King enters the Royal harem, or, having done so, leaves it alive.

The King's first visit to Europe tended for the time to civilise him, but before a year had expired he wanted to execute his Prime Minister. He had lighted his palace with gas, and even started the electric light there : but when he did not pay the salary of the genial Frenchman who provided that light, all was dark once more. In fact, the Shah was introduced to the high-handed proceedings of gas companies in Europe. After that the Frenchman got his pay, and the supply has been steady since. The King now returns salutes, as a rule : before his visits to Europe he did not. He now looks at the pictures in the illustrated journals with

pleasure. But when he last crossed the Caspian he slept on the floor of the ladies' cabin under the table, and on the table he put his boots. He maintains a staff of giants and dwarfs. Once it was a pleasure to the "Asylum of the Universe" to fill a boat on one of the large tanks of his numerous country palaces with the grandees of his kingdom clad in gala costume, and to go into fits of laughter as the boat sank, and the pillars of the Empire crawled out muddy, wet, and bedraggled. And they say on the last visit of the King of Kings to Europe, when seated between two Royal ladies at the dinner-table, on tasting and sucking a stick of asparagus, that he offered the half-devoured butt to the more august of the two, with the idea that she should enjoy the pleasure he had experienced, saying with innocent enjoyment, "Ba, ba! how good it is!"

Under former reigns in Persia, the rule was that no male person over ten years of age should be found on the line of route of a royal wife or daughter. It was death to disobey this order. Even now Europeans wisely avoid unpleasantness by turning down a side-street when they hear the shouts of "Gitchen" (*i.e.*, "Begone" in Turkish) from the eunuchs who accompany the palace ladies. The late American Minister, Mr. Benjamin, made a great mistake on one occasion by neglecting this plan. With true American simplicity, he was accustomed to ride through the streets with only one servant. Meeting the procession one day, he failed to turn out of its path. The result was that his servant was beaten, and he himself was hustled into a by-road. Next day he duly lodged a complaint of this treatment; and had to put up with the apology "that, naturally, the royal servants would not recognise

a 'one-horse Minister.' " General Gersteiger Khan, an Austrian officer of Engineers, many years in the service of the Shah, was wiser in his generation. He met the late Queen-Mother and the royal ladies when he was on foot, turned his face to the wall like a native, and, as each carriage passed, deliberately saluted from the back of his head. The ladies screamed with laughter and told the Shah; who persuaded him to repeat his novel salutes, and then congratulated him on his discretion.

A good deal is known of the royal seraglio from those who have had opportunities of seeing it; but these persons are few. A French pianiste (whose portrait, clad in Persian indoor dress—well described as ballet-costume minus the maillots—was in great request at Teheran); Mdme. Hadji Abbas, an aged Frenchwoman who passed forty years in the royal palace as interpreter to the royalladies; and an Italian lady, the wife of the Mustaufi-ul-Mamalek, were the only persons in Persia who could really speak on this subject with authority. When I say authority, I would not have the reader to forget a certain tendency to "embroider" which is more pronounced in the one sex than the other, perhaps. During my long residence in Persia I only knew of one *anderūn* or harem tragedy: in that case a black slave was pistolled and a lady died. But these accidents did not occur in the King's palace. I remember an unfortunate who, while he was engaged in excavating a watercourse, suddenly found himself in the royal harem; and nearly died of fright accordingly. But the King, seeing how the matter stood, pardoned him.

Fresh acquisitions for the seraglio arrive frequently, at times in batches. The mode of getting rid of those

who have ceased to please is simple and yet ingenious. There is no awful tragedy, no casting from towers, no bowstring, no poisoning. Some provincial general is informed that he will be favoured with a wife from the royal harem. To refuse is impossible; the disgusted lady arrives, and is placed at the head of her new husband's household. She usually insists on his immediately divorcing his other wives, and in any case treats them as servants and inferiors. One of my Persian friends was General F—— Khan. He became the recipient of one of these royal favours. She led him a sad life, and he never alluded to her but (in a whisper) as "the old camel."

Beauty and youth are the few and simple qualifications for entering the royal harem. Various accomplishments, such as singing, playing on the hand-drum or tumbak, the tambourine, or the harmonica, are often acquired after the lady has been received into the seraglio. Every lady who becomes a royal wife has a separate establishment and servants of her own in the harem enclosure. Only the fresh arrivals, and those who have failed to please, live together in a sort of barrack, under the supervision of the Amin-i-Akdas, an old favourite who acts as a sort of "mother of the maids." Every Thursday there is a kind of review; the Shah personally inspecting the whole establishment other than the recognised wives and favourites. The throwing of the handkerchief is no invention, and has not gone out of practice.

The number of legitimate wives (or akdi) for every Mussulman is four. The head wife, the cousin of the Shah, having the title of Shuku-es-Sultana, is the great-

granddaughter of Futteh-Ali Shah : a monarch whose family was so large that one hundred and ten of his descendants were alive at his death. This lady is mother of the Crown Prince, or Valliad. Her marriage with the King was one of policy. The next wife in seniority is the daughter of a son of Futteh-Ali Shah. She is only known to Rumour as having a somewhat sharp temper. The third wife, and the actual favourite, is the Anys-u-Dowlet. She has been a legitimate wife nearly ten years, is very fat, fairly good-looking, and is said to be very good-tempered and attractive. She actually accompanied the Shah as far as Moscow on his first journey to Europe ; but the attempts to see her by the Russians of all classes were so pertinacious, that, to her great disappointment, she was sent back to Teheran. The Anys-u-Dowlet has immense influence, and yet she never takes a bribe. But her own family is well cared for. Three of her relatives fill important positions at the Court, where their reputation is not that of their royal kinswoman. The whole family were the children of a village miller who lived near Dimarvend, a nearly extinct volcano, which, capped with eternal snow, towers over Teheran, and may be seen at a distance of two hundred miles.

Of the Seegahs, the mother of the Zil-es-Sultan, the King's eldest son, is the senior. She looks well after the interests of her son. She was a poor Kurdi girl ; her brother, who occupies the office of Master of the Horse to his nephew, is an extremely rude and rough kind of personage. The mother of the Naib-u-Sultaneh, a favourite son of the Shah (whom he much resembles), ranks next. This lady also is not of royal

blood, being the daughter of the Maimar-bashi, or head architect.

The amusements of the ladies are tea-parties, music, story-telling, the bath—in which they spend many hours—picnics, excursions in the royal carriages, smoking, and the eating and making of sweetmeats and confectionery and pickles. The honour of being selected to accompany the King on his hunting excursions is much coveted and jealously intrigued for. When in the large glass coaches of the King the ladies are not cruelly careful to conceal their charms from the casual European. Most of those who were in the habit of driving on the Gulahak-road, *the* drive outside Teheran, have caught many glimpses of the royal ladies as their carriages passed the vehicles of the Feringhis at a gallop. These “lights of the harem” are much bedizened and much painted, and as a rule—and except for their magnificent eyes—ugly. Possibly the ladies do not go out till they have become a little *passées*; or not, perhaps, till increasing obesity renders carriage exercise a necessity. It must not be supposed that all, or even most, Persian ladies are fat and ugly: that would be quite a mistake. Life in the royal harem tends to fatness, perhaps.

Formerly the King’s harem was governed by the Shah’s mother, who had immense influence with her son. She was a stern monitress, and harem executions under her rule were frequent. This clever woman had her detractors, who made her out a sort of Catherine of Persia. They were not far wrong.



CHAPTER III.

THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN PERSIA.

The Zil-es-Sultan—His titles—His birth—Probable succession to throne—His palace—Courtiers—Litigants—Jews—Murderers—Executioners—Private apartments—Shampooing—Reading Poetry—Strange room—Fountains—Persian justice—A royal sportsman—Court intrigues—Temporary disgrace.

THE Zil-es-Sultan ("Shadow of the King") is indeed well named; for, save that he is more stoutly built, he is the living image of his royal father, the "Asylum of the Universe." Possibly one of the reasons that he is the favourite son is this striking resemblance. Formerly known as Yemeen-u-Dowleh (or "Power of the Government"), the higher title of Zil-es-Sultan was conferred on him as a signal mark of the Shah's affection. These sounding and poetical titles—such as "Pillar of the State," "Eye of the Kingdom"—are the means by which the Persian Kings have from ancient times honoured their kinsmen and rewarded the most distinguished of their subjects: they are not hereditary titles, but are much coveted.

The Zil-es-Sultan is the eldest son of the King's first love. It is commonly believed that his Majesty first saw the Prince's mother, a lovely village girl, washing

clothes at the side of a stream. Be this as it may, she was of the *bas peuple*; and the Khan Di (the maternal uncle of his Royal Highness and his master of horse, or Mir Achor, literally "lord of the manger"), recalls by his rude manners and boorish speech the lowness of the Prince's extraction on the mother's side. But for his birth, the Zil-es-Sultan would ere this have been acknowledged as the Shah's successor. But to be of royal blood, on both sides of the house, has long been a necessary qualification in the heir to the Persian throne. Still, the reigning monarch generally contrives to leave his kingdom to his favourite son if capable of ruling. That the eldest son of the Shah by a royal princess is a weak-minded nonentity, is known to all the subjects of the "King of Kings"; and the Shah will probably take the initiative in declaring the Zil-es-Sultan his successor. The young man himself openly says that he means to succeed his father, and the Shah does not reprove him for doing so.

We will suppose that, furnished with the cap of invisibility, we have passed through the crowd of loafers and beggars who throng the gates of a Prince-Governor, and that we have evaded the ragged sentry who guards the narrow door. We find ourselves in a large garden with numerous and wide brick paths, where sunken rectangular flower-beds are fenced off by telegraph-wire running through wooden posts painted blue and red. Numerous parties of litigants, courtiers, merchants and others, throng the paths: each man of consideration followed by his servants and hangers-on. Conversation goes on in loud tones; there is much button-holeing and whispering. As the servants of his Royal Highness

come and go, they are pounced upon and interrogated by the crowd of litigants and placemen. In one corner are huddled some miserable Jews: these have come to make a petition or a complaint. They assuredly have reason enough, for Jews are much persecuted in Persia: every child stones and curses them. But they will get justice from the Zil-es-Sultan: for he, wise man, squeezes only the great: these poor Jews he will protect. In a further corner, cowering on their haunches and heavily ironed, are two highway robbers, clad in the blue cotton pyjamas and shirt of the agricultural class; on their heads are tall conical caps of brown felt. Guilty of murder and robbery, they are guarded by a couple of rough-looking fellows, well and warmly dressed, each with a curved dagger at his girdle, and armed with a bludgeon of the tough arjeen wood surmounted by an iron head. They chat in a friendly way with the prisoners, one of whom smokes a water-pipe: perhaps it may be his last. A few yards from this group are several men binding long straight boughs into bundles and trimming off the twigs; they are preparing bastinado "sticks" under the direction of two hangdog-looking men in red—executioners. No one notices them; they are beneath contempt. There is a crowd at one side of this garden. Here at an open window questions of revenue are being settled by one of the Prince's secretaries, a gentlemanly man in a long sad-coloured garment of fine broadcloth. But we must hasten on.

We now pass the burly and much-bearded doorkeeper and his heavy silver mace. Raising a thick canvas curtain, on which is coarsely embroidered a colossal

figure of a Persian soldier presenting arms, we enter a small courtyard of the khulwu, or private apartments of the Prince; up a dark passage, and we come to a curtained door, outside which are some dozen pairs of shoes. By these we know the exact number of those inside, minus one—his Royal Highness; who, like the King, does not take off his shoes save at a shrine or mosque. The room is purposely darkened. Yes, there sits the Prince, supported by cushions on a mattress. He is evidently out of sorts; his hakim-bashi is feeling his pulse. The Governor of Yezd (formerly his favourite personal attendant) is kneading one knee, the Governor of Bonat is gently rubbing the other. Two attendants are softly pommeling the princely feet; while the chief barber, an important personage, is carefully and scientifically shampooing the back of his neck. Mirza Reza, the Prince's confidential valet, a man who has been Governor of Fussa (under his Royal Highness), is reading poetry. The Prince goes on conversing. Mirza Reza stops but for a second, and his Royal Highness looks up indignantly: "Ah, son of a burnt father, read! read on!" It may be observed that the policy of the Zil-es-Sultan has ever been to surround himself with servants and dependents of common birth. This he does with deliberate purpose. "They have only me to look to," he will say; "I am their family, their hope, their all." Evidently the Prince is in pain. "Rub, rub," he cries, "ye sons of unspeakable mothers!" "Ah!" with a sigh of relief, "*that* is good—that is very good!" The chief barber, whose clever shampooing has earned this praise, smiles with pleasure. "Mirza Reza, Mirza Reza *Khan*!" This

is shouted ; and the confidential valet stops his monotonous poetry. "Let our chief barber have our fur-lined cloak—the red one." The delighted barber, who is to receive a gift worth some thirty pounds, stops to thank the Prince. "Rub, rascal, rub!" is the reply.

"May I be your sacrifice, it is my petition, the petition of your slave, that his Excellency the Imam-i-Juma desires the privilege of presenting his salaams," whispers one of the royal attendants, entering the room bowing to the ground, his hands placed upon his knees. "Bismillah! let him come," is the reply. The Prince rises. He is an athletic young man of considerable muscular power, inclined to breadth rather than height, of middle stature, with small hands and feet of which he is very proud, black curly hair, a fair complexion, a jetty moustache, and a voice exactly like that of the Shah. Mirza Reza hands him his newly-fashioned hat of finest cloth. The Prince, who affects to lead the ever-changing fashions of Persia, hurriedly buttons his *alkalūk*, or inner paletot, of pale blue *moire antique*, embroidered with tasteful but rather florid designs in gold and colours. He wears an English shirt. He clasps the great circular buckle of diamonds—it is four inches in diameter—which fastens a plain black leather belt around his waist, and then slips into a yellow overcoat of Cashmere shawl, lined throughout and trimmed with sable fur. Black trousers with a gold-lace stripe, made in London, complete the sufficiently grand and becoming costume worn by the Governor of the largest portion of Persia: at the present moment thirty-three years of age.

Let us follow him as he passes into the summer-

room of state audience. This ancient room is probably unique. In the centre is a large tank of running water, three feet deep; from this tank rise stone columns, their bases composed of nude figures about four feet high. Each of the figures spouts from its mouth a tiny stream; all around the tank are various jets, which also add to the noise of falling water. Little light comes in through the coloured glass windows and their curtains. Into and over the tank projects a stone takht (bed or throne), some three feet over the surface of the water. Here, when Ispahan was the capital of Persia, was the royal audience-chamber of the Shahs. Cool, certainly, and picturesque; but in a country where ague is rife the man who occupies a damp room cannot be wise. The Zil-es-Sultan is no fool; and he passes on through this extraordinary chamber into a large well-lighted apartment, the walls and ceiling of which are elaborately painted and gilded. The intricately constructed windows of coloured glass are raised, a large and empty courtyard is seen beyond them, and just in front of the window is a huge raised hauz of stone, the fountains in which are spouting freely. The Imam-i-Juma, as he enters, is invited to a seat close to his Royal Highness, on his own royal carpet, which is about seven feet by three wide, and is spread on a thin mattress over the luxurious felts, three inches thick, that serve as frame to the magnificent carpets.

As the prince sits at the open window, the farrash-bashi (literally head carpet-spreader), the chief of the police, enters the court-yard with the two robbers and their guard. Addressing one of them, the Prince

says, in a loud and angry tone, "Ah! son of a dog, so you too levy taxes on my father's subjects?" "May I be your Highness's sacrifice, it isn't my fault," mutters the criminal. The Prince turns to the Imam-i-Juma, a tall Seyud (descendant of the Prophet) in a black turban, and details the crimes of the robber. The high priest nods: "Yes, yes; may I be your sacrifice, he is indeed a merciless one!" "So I think," replies the Prince. "Take him away!" and the Prince whispers something into the ear of the farrash-bashi, who is standing close to the open window. "As for you"—(the other prisoner bows to the ground) "you are an ass, the father of all asses. You, rascal, may thank our mercy; you are dismissed." The farrash-bashi retires with his prisoners. Their irons are removed. The one walks off a free man; a sullen booming report in a few minutes announces the blowing from a gun of the other. The Imam-i-Juma takes his leave. The Prince yawns, carelessly saying, "The one dog is gone at last; bring the other four." No sooner said than done. Two fine Dutch mastiffs of tawny hue are led into the courtyard, as well as two small three-quarter-bred bulldogs. They are loosed at the Prince's order, and career wildly about the court-yard. The Prince feeds them with sugar, as he breakfasts in solitary state. Unlike most Persians, he does not smoke. Then he plays perhaps a game or two of chess, of which he is very fond—a good player too, though etiquette of course does not allow him to be beaten. Then he sallies forth to ride; and once in the saddle the Zil-es-Sultan is happy. He rides wildly but well. He shouts, he smiles, he is in the best of

temper. Perhaps he dismounts to shoot at a mark. Being a fine shot, he is fond of displaying his prowess; he will break bottles, he will hit oranges, eggs, and halfpence flying: he seldom even misses a keran, a silver coin a little bigger than a sixpence, when flung into the air: and all with a bullet fired from a fowling-piece.

The days of his youth are over—the wild youth of a favoured Eastern Prince. Married to the wealthy daughter of a former Prime Minister of Persia (who was strangled by order of the present Shah), the Prince was left a widower about five years ago. His son, the Jellál-u-dowleh, is a promising youth of fifteen, and the nominal Governor of Shiraz under his father. The Prince has several daughters. He dines about eight, still alone, and at nine generally retires to his *anderūn* or harem, where we cannot follow him even with our invisible cap.

A Governor of vast provinces from his cradle, firm and sometimes perhaps unscrupulous, a hard but just master, wily as a Governor in Persia has need to be, unprejudiced, unfanatical, generous, with many virtues and few foibles: such is the Shah's favourite son.

This spring (1886) the Zil-es-Sultan has been very unfortunate. Firstly, his Teheran palace was burnt down in January, the loss actually amounting to £12,000, (there are no insurance offices in Persia, and rightly so, for if a Persian could insure his house he would certainly burn it down if the amount insured exceeded the value). Then his royal highness made a bid for power. He offered the King an enormous bribe for the post of Prime Minister (be it remembered

that in Persia all offices are sold). But his brother, the Naib-u-Sultaneh, War Minister, and a favourite son of the King, flung himself at the feet of the Shah, and declared that "if the King made his elder brother Prime Minister, he would be signing his own death-warrant." The Shah became alarmed, and the Zil-es-Sultan was ordered to proceed at once to his seat of provincial government. Of course he became opportunely ill, but the King was peremptory, and he had to go; after having disbursed very considerable sums. Possibly what annoyed him more than anything during his stay in Teheran was the having to bow down to the heir-apparent, his younger but more nobly-born brother, the Valliad. He had to go out to meet him, by the King's order: thus as it were showing to the public his inferior position. And then, to secure his favour he had to make him a (*nominal*) present of a palace he has just completed. This the Valliad graciously accepted, but, as usual, gave it back as a free gift to the Zil-es-Sultan's own son, his nephew. The Iffat-u-dowleh (Chastity of the Government), mother of the Zil-es-Sultan, did her best for her son, but being no longer beautiful, not a princess, and not an "Akdi" or wife with full legal rights, she could do little. So now the Zil-es-Sultan is temporarily out of favour, and not being permitted to bask in the sunshine of the royal presence, he seeks consolation in Ispahan in the productions of a French cook, his latest acquisition: as the Persians say, "smoking the pipe of meditation, seated on the carpet of humility."



CHAPTER IV.

SIR RONALD THOMSON, H.M.'S MINISTER TO THE COURT OF PERSIA, IN TEHERAN.

Le Boulevard des Ambassadeurs—Striking View—Demarvend—
“The Mission”—Exterior—Interior—Our Minister in Persia—
His career—Politics—Hospitality of Minister—His services.

THERE is one thoroughfare in Teheran which comes up to the European idea of a street: it is broad, it has a footpath on either side, and the lower half of it is paved, as old city streets used to be paved. This, the only real street in all Persia, is dignified by the name of Le Boulevard des Ambassadeurs. There are even lamps in it: each lamp holds a tin candlestick, and in each tin candlestick is a Russian composite candle. Not that there is no gas in Teheran; there is gas, even the electric light in the Shah's palace—it may even now be laid on to the one street—but very lately, each evening at sunset, the candles were regularly lit by a boy, who, with surprising agility, sprang on to a tall tripod which he carried from lamp to lamp. Several of the embassies are in this thoroughfare; at the extreme top, on the left-hand side, is the palace of the “English Mission,” as it is always termed by the English in

Teheran. The *coup d'œil* from the bottom of the Boulevard des Ambassadeurs is striking; for the rapidly-rising street gives a direct view of the green hills and black mountains, covered or patched with snow at most times, and in the hottest season even some snow may generally be seen. Demarvend, too, the huge slumbering volcano, with its eternal crown of snow, changing as it does at sunrise and sunset to every possible tint, is grand in the extreme. A fine gate, at which a Persian sentry keeps guard by sitting on his heels, and seizing his musket, springing to attention, and presenting arms, like one of the bold gendarmes, at our approach, admits us to the gardens of the "Mission." So rapid is the growth of vegetation in Persia, that this garden, not fifteen years old, is already thick with shady trees. Of course, such plentiful foliage is produced by irrigation; and the cost of buying and conveying the water to the "Mission" grounds was very heavy. To our right, and in front, are the various villa residences, detached and semi-detached, occupied by the secretaries and the doctor, Sir Joseph Dickson. Unpretentious and thoroughly English in appearance, these little houses have a flavour of home here in the far East. Turning to the left, we come to the "Mission" itself, literally a palace even in this city of palaces, Teheran; and it differs much from a Persian palace, which is what Anglo-Indians term *cutcha* built, while His Excellency's residence is unmistakably *pucka*, or solid. Here is no plaster-work of curious intricacy, simulating marble; all is solid brick and stone. There is an iron roof, with air-chamber beneath, to keep the rooms cool, and

there is a huge clock-tower, with a bell; this is a notable thing in Persia, where time is of no object, and monster clock-towers are not. The "Mission" forms three sides of a square, in the midst of which is a huge *parterre* of flowers and shrubs; the principal entrance is in the centre of the building.

The "Mission" has been compared to a barrack, with a dash of a lunatic asylum; but when it was designed by the late Major Pierson, R.E., he had an extremely difficult task to make a building that would be warm in winter and fairly cool in summer. But he succeeded indifferently well; and our Ambassador is lodged, as he deserves to be, *en prince*. The centre of the building is occupied by the state apartments, the finest rooms in Teheran; and all the furniture and appointments, even to the crimson carpets and the phenomenally huge mirrors, were brought from England regardless of expense. These state apartments are crowned by an original-looking belvedere, which, if not useful, is decidedly ornamental; while the view from it of the city and the dark mountains in its vicinity is very grand. The actual building is thus only occupied by Sir Ronald Thomson himself, whose private apartments are in one wing, while the other is used as a *chancellerie*. Behind the state apartments is a beautiful and luxuriant garden, cooled by magnificent hauzes, or ornamental ponds, with stone edges, which keep the water about a foot above the level of the ground; as the water always gently overflows these edges, a sleepy murmur is produced, and the air is cooled by the large evaporating surface. This earthly paradise appertains to the privacy of the Minister.

Besides the fitting town residence thus provided, there are country quarters at Gulhaek, a village at the foot of the mountains some seven miles off, where a small villa residence is occupied by Sir Ronald, who is a bachelor; while several rooms are constructed by means of an Indian major-general's state tent, which serve as dining-room, drawing-room, &c. The whole is in a huge garden, and dotted about are the tiny villas of the secretaries, also supplemented by tents. Here, in the village of Gulhaek, it is literally *imperium in imperio*; for, for many years by tradition, Gulhaek has been under the authority of the British Minister. Another honour that Sir Ronald Thomson possesses as Minister is the royal one of keeping peacocks. This is a jealously-guarded privilege, in Persia, of the King and royal personages.

Sir Ronald Thomson has not been employed in other countries than Persia. He is said to be the last "local diplomatist" who will be appointed to a Ministership; for it is supposed at the Foreign Office that a "local," however useful he may be from his mastery of local politics, would soon be imbued with local prejudices, and might possibly contract objectionable local ties. But, surely, in the case of a country like Persia the experienced "local diplomatist," if he combine even a small portion of the qualities of Sir Ronald Thomson, being an entity, would be always preferable to a puppet, innocent of Eastern ways. However ingeniously such a puppet might be manipulated from the Foreign Office, he would still remain a puppet in the hands of some obscure "local," probably his own Oriental secretary. In dealing with the wily and

semi-civilised Persian we must remember that his ways are not our ways, and his modes of thought, though inexplicable to the ordinary diplomatic Briton, are perfectly intelligible to the "local diplomatist," if, like Sir Ronald Thomson, he retains his pristine energy, and remains mentally unenervated by a long Eastern experience. Sir Ronald has served an arduous apprenticeship under Dr. Shiel, Sir C. Murray, Sir H. Rawlinson, and that most difficult of masters, the late Mr. Alison (the favourite secretary of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe), and his brother Sir W. Thomson. He speaks Persian like a pundit, and is versed in its vast literature; he has most of the great personages in Teheran as his friends and acquaintances, Sir Ronald Thomson having absolutely no enemies; and he is a valued friend, contemporary, and adviser of the Shah himself, and accompanied His Majesty on his first visit to Europe. Such an experienced "local diplomatist" as Sir Ronald Thomson is far more likely to be useful to his Government than a man who has never before been in the East, who has no sympathies and no experience, and who goes to his post as to exile, determined to get his remove or pension at the first opportunity, ignorant alike of the language, people, and politics of Persia, and possibly suffering from acute Persophobia.

Sir Ronald Thomson is emphatically a worker. There is no parade of work, quite the contrary, but the Minister has been thirty-seven years in Persia, and is an early riser like the Persians; the early mornings and afternoons, which the majority of Europeans in that country spend in sleep, are passed by him at the

writing-table. Unlike many diplomatists Sir Ronald Thomson is always at his post, and thus his influence at the Persian Court is persistently felt. But it is uphill work to represent Her Majesty at the Court of the "Asylum of the Universe." A Persian, from the King to the meanest of his subjects, is ever open to a bribe, and English Ministers, whatever they may have been able to do in what is looked on by the Persians as the good old times, can now neither bribe nor intimidate. It is a far cry to England, and the great White Czar is near—unpleasantly near—to unprotected Persia. Herat we do not give to the Persians; the hope of the possession of Herat, like a bob-cherry, dances for ever in pleasing contiguity or depressing distance before the royal eyes of the "King of Kings," and naturally the royal mouth waters. But even the Shah will not play bob-cherry for ever. This bait, the fear of Russia, and the personal affection and respect of the Shah for Sir Ronald Thomson, together with the yearly income the King derives from the telegraph, are the only causes of our toleration in Persia.

Our Minister's hospitality is freely lavished on the few English subjects in Teheran, from the head of the telegraph department to the wandering globe-trotter or scientist; or even to the little old Indian Parsee merchant, who, though presenting himself in an impossible nondescript get-up, crowned by a jockey's cap, is yet received and royally entertained on the Queen's birthday. Is he not, too, a British subject? Of course the other entertainments are also on a princely scale, and worthy of the magnificent sur-

roundings of the British Minister to the Court of Persia. The truism that no man can serve two masters seems, in the case of Sir Ronald Thomson, to be disproved, for his tenure of office has been as satisfactory to the various Indian Viceroy's who have ruled during his incumbency of the "Mission" at Teheran as to the different Foreign Office chiefs. A copy of every dispatch that leaves the Teheran Mission has to be forwarded to the Calcutta authorities. Of the 17,000*l.* a year expended on the representation of England at the Persian Court, more than two-thirds are drawn from Indian resources, and on this ground the English Minister at Teheran has more than once been an Indian official, an error which will probably never be repeated.

Sir Ronald Thomson is of Scotch extraction, and he was first appointed third paid *attaché* in 1848, first paid *attaché* in 1852, Oriental Secretary in 1862; was *chargé d'affaires* for three months in the same year; was made Secretary of Legation in 1863, when he was again *chargé d'affaires*; made his well-known inquiry at Urumieh into the condition of the Nestorians in 1866; then frequently *chargé d'affaires*; and finally was made Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in 1879. He was made a K.C.M.G. last year, and a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire in 1880; and he is a Fellow of the Geographical Society. Sir Ronald Thomson has the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*; his mild and gentle manner is but the velvet glove to the hand of iron. Sir Ronald Thomson is nearly sixty years of age, of tall and handsome presence, and has a soft, low voice. He is now in the

prime of his mental activity, and never spares himself. His one weakness is for a good cigar. After the early cup of tea the Minister may be seen walking in his grounds at 6 A.M., or if at Gulhaek, in his summer quarters, he rambles through the tortuous lanes in the neighbourhood, unostentatiously attended by a couple of mounted gholams (or guards). These men are taken more from custom than use. Then work, breakfast at eleven, more work, perhaps a reception or official visit, *asri* (in the latter part of the afternoon), then another walk, or a carriage drive, dinner at seven, and the day is over. If the Minister burns the midnight oil, he does not brag of it; but brag of any kind is foreign to his character.

Sir Ronald Thomson's services through his long career have been more real than apparent. He it was who carried through the long and difficult negotiations relative to the establishment of our Government telegraph department in Persia, and no doubt the early and chequered career of that department gave him an infinity of trouble. To the lot of the then First Secretary of Legation it fell to keep within due limits the exuberance of missionary zeal. Of the services of the present Minister during the Afghan War it is needless to speak; they are well known and have been rewarded. But the great end and aim of our Minister at the Court of Persia is to watch, report on, and successfully frustrate the designs of Russia, till recently only too ably represented by M. Zenoviev at Teheran.



CHAPTER V.

THE MAGISTRATE IN PERSIA.

Boiled to death — Police magistrates — Extortion — Torture — A Woman's tragedy — The Bastinado — Ferocious punishments — Crucifixion — Persian justice.

WHEN the hereditary governor of a great city tells you that his grandfather was boiled to death and that his own fate may not be different, it strikes you that the grandsire probably was, and that the grandson is, somehow connected with a sugar refinery. But when the gentleman proceeds to explain that his ancestor was *judicially* boiled to death, and that the only favour he could obtain was that the water should be hot and not cold when he was plunged into it, a thrill of horror, tempered with incredulity, is apt to freeze the listener; but yet such things are, and will be again, in Persia. The hereditary governor of the town of Shiraz, the capital of Fars, the richest and largest province of modern Persia, was the gentleman who had lost his grandfather in this way.

It will be objected, probably, that this punishment occurred some time ago, and that things have changed. Things in Persia never change; they only decay. In the last Persian famine, not fifteen years ago, the bakers of the town of Ispahan adulterated the bread;

for grain was at famine prices, and they were compelled to sell a certain amount of bread at the ordinary rate. The people complained of the adulteration. The governor sent for the bakers and thus addressed them: "If this goes on, my friends, I shall bake one of you in his own oven." *And he meant it.* It has often been done in Persia. Did the bread improve? Not at all. There was simply no bread; for the bakers ran away. *Bakers have been baked in Persia.*

The Persian criminal law in important matters is administered by the governors of provinces. Their rapacious avarice is fortunately tempered by public opinion, the openly-expressed advice of the great religious lawyers, and the reprobation of the holy men. Drunkards, adulterers, and heretics are judged by the chiefs of religion, and handed over for punishment to the secular arm, when the accused have no more money to bribe with. The jurisdiction over petty offenders is exercised in towns by the darogas or police-masters, and in villages by the ketkhodas or head men. The ketkhoda justice consists in talking over the matter with the greybeards of the village; and on restitution being made, and a few silver coins handed to the judge, the criminal is absolved. If, however, the accused—unless he can absolutely prove his innocence—has no money, he is thrashed, and there is an end of the case. In serious matters the prisoner is sent on to the provincial governor.

The daroga, or police-magistrate, is merciless and openly venal. He punishes confirmed drunkards and the notoriously vicious. He has but one treatment for all suspects—the stocks and starvation. While the

prisoner's money lasts he is a guest ; it is only when his means are exhausted that he becomes a criminal. His money gone, his clothes taken as the perquisite of his jailors, his feet in the stocks in a dark and stifling room crowded with other poor wretches in a similar plight, the position of the "suspect" in Persia is a very bad one. There is no trial in minor cases : when the daroga has taken all he can and there is no booty to be recovered, the criminal is generally allowed to go free ; but when there is booty the daroga sees his way to better profits. First, he makes up to the criminal, saying, "Give me half and I will let you go." Of course, if the prisoner is weak enough to consent, the police-master takes all ; but, if a comparatively honest man, he allows the prisoner to escape. If, however, the daroga is a bad-tempered man or greedy, and irritated at not getting as much as he expected out of the case, he hands over the criminal to the provincial governor, who either beats, kills, or imprisons the man, according to fancy. But if the prisoner fails to deliver up what he is accused of stealing, either because it is too valuable or because he has not got it or never had it, then the daroga resorts to torture to extract a confession. This is the ordinary course of Persian justice. The prisoner has matches burned between his fingers, wedges are thrust into the already narrow apertures of the stocks, both feet are placed in them, heavy irons are added, or a sharp log is placed under the prisoner's loins ; moreover, the wretched man is half starved. The natural result follows : if guilty he confesses, and the police-master gets the spoil ; and, as before, the prisoner is either allowed to

escape or he is handed over to the higher powers. To all his captives in what we should call remand police cases, the daroga freely administers the bastinado, with the declared intention of breaking the wicked spirit of his victims—in fact “pour encourager les autres.” Naturally the daroga takes bribes from complainants too; and often the complainant will pay to let a prisoner go, his heart melting at the treatment the man receives. The result of this system is that, unless there is property to be recovered, it is rarely that any one seeks justice from the daroga. His victims are generally those caught *flagrante delicto*—burglars, gamblers, drunkards (who are very numerous), pilferers, and prostitutes. These latter are, as a rule, tolerated. They are under the absolute jurisdiction either of the daroga or the public executioner. At times—but very rarely—a wretched woman will be mixed up in some crime, and then she is generally punished in a terrible way. She may be cast living into a well, poisoned, or beaten to death. One such instance occurred under my own observation. A young woman of the lower ranks was in the habit of frequenting dances and entertainments of the rich. She was pretty, and had a certain reputation. Some one drew the Queen-mother’s notice to her escapades. She was sent for, and unfortunately replied to the charges of the royal lady by a *tu quoque*. The Queen-mother handed the girl over to her guard, ordering that she should be wrapped in a carpet and jumped on till life was extinct. The sentence was carried out, and it would not have excited much attention but for the youth, beauty, and notoriety of the victim.

The bastinado is universal in Persia, and it is not supposed that there is any disgrace in it. To "eat stick" is the idiom used for the suffering of this punishment. The schoolboy, the burglar, the highway robber, the Prime Minister, the King's sons—these all may and do "eat stick." The feet are placed in a noose attached to the middle of a pole some eight feet long; the culprit lies on the ground on his back, his bare feet being held about a yard higher. Big switches some six feet long are broken into fragments on the soles of the sufferer. This punishment may be trifling, or it may be carried to a fatal result. Every man of position has the pole in the corner of his courtyard and the rods lying in pickle in his tank; for they are always soaked to prevent their breaking too soon. Age is no protection, nor rank. The Muschir-ul-Molk, certainly over seventy-five years of age—the former Vice-Governor of Fars and collector of its revenue—received a severe bastinado at the hands of the King's uncle, the then Governor of Fars. His crime was that he was rich, and a personal enemy of the man in power.

The chiefs of the law and holy men are not, as a rule, cruel in their punishments. Adulterers they fine and imprison, drunkards they swear to sobriety, and then if they are unmindful of their oaths they receive the cat o'-nine-tails (*taziana*). These judges mostly confine themselves to civil matters, and of criminal affairs as a rule they are only too glad to be rid. There are also motessibs, or inspectors of markets. These men break faulty measures and scales, and seize (for their own profit) decayed or adulterated provisions, or

take small bribes for not doing so. Thus the offenders are really fined.

The provincial governors have the power of life and death, though in the present day a telegram is usually received from the Shah himself before any capital sentence is carried out. The governors vary much in their ideas of policy. Some men, such as the late Hissam-u-Sultaneh, the King's uncle, and his brother Khosro Mirza, and the Zil-es-Sultan, the King's eldest son, are severe governors; their theory being that on taking up a province they must inspire fear to produce tranquillity. To do this, within a few days of the arrival of the new governor there is a gaol-delivery. A certain number of offenders—singled out from the really guilty, and those who cannot bribe—being determined on, they are marched into the public square and their throats cut; or they are walled up in pillars, perhaps in a row of a dozen; or some of them are blown from guns. Throat-cutting is the ordinary capital punishment of Persia. Thieves are commonly hamstrung or lose their hands or feet. These are the usual punishments of the Persians to-day: others more cruel, such as burning to death and crucifixion (the sufferer is nailed to a wall, and often lives many hours, having at last to be put out of his misery), are reserved for atrocious crimes like parricide and robberies from royal personages. I myself saw a young fellow crucified in Shiraz for stealing the golden head-stall of the horse of the King's son. The gaol-delivery ends by beating the remainder of the prisoners, or fining them, and then sending them about their business. Then the new governor telegraphs to the Shah, "Perfect tranquillity ;

gaols empty." Whether the theory of the severe governors is sound or not may be doubted: one thing is certain—that they are a terror to evil-doers. On the appointment of any of the three governors mentioned, highway robbers, thieves, burglars, coiners, *et cætera*, go out of business and lead severely honest lives.

As to the administration of justice, it is generally (where there is no bribery) administered by the provincial governors upon common-sense principles; and where the case is proven, and an example is required, no time is lost. "What have you to say, you rascal?" The criminal shrugs his shoulders. The governor significantly draws his finger across his own throat. "Take him away," he says. In five minutes the man is lying dead in the square. But if there be any doubt, the prisoner gets the benefit of it; unless an example is needed, he is never executed for murder. There are no long terms of imprisonment, no female side to the gaols. "Strip him and let him go," is the rule in criminal justice in Persia, and most crimes are merely punished by an imprisonment of a few days or weeks, and a more or less severe beating. Justice is rough but rapid, and the worst punishments still in force are not looked upon by the Persians themselves as cruel or vindictive. In the tales of Saadi, "the King smiled and ordered him to be rewarded," or "the King frowned and ordered him to receive a thousand blows;" and so it is now. Short, sharp, severe, but not intentionally cruel save when it is desired to awe the evil-doer—such is Persian justice.



CHAPTER VI.

CIVIL ACTIONS IN PERSIA.

Persian law—Universal avoidance of lawsuits—Mercantile suits—
Bribery universal—Progress of a suit—Termination.

LAW in Persia has one virtue: it is inexpensive, and usually the final decision, always a specious one, is soon arrived at. It is astonishing how much justice can be administered without legal machinery in the East, possibly by rule of thumb; still as a rule it is justice, of a sort; and appeals are very infrequent. Disputes in Persia are generally confined to the keeping of contracts, the title to landed property, disputed wills, the heritages of intestates, the boundaries and shares of water, of lands, and the recovery of debts and bankruptcy. Divorce is dealt with by the heads of religion. The preliminary step in all Persian disputes is a reference by consent to arbitration; from highest to lowest there is a wholesome dread of spending money in going to law; true, there are no court fees, but ten per cent. as a right, and a fluctuating present according to the rapacity of the local or provincial governor, are serious items. If one side bribes, the other must; if influence is used by the plaintiff, the defendant must avail himself of the same means

if he can command it, if he cannot do so, he must buy it.

In all mercantile cases including bankruptcy, the matter in dispute is at once referred to a mejlis (or council) of the leading merchants. A polite note summons them to the house of the principal merchant of the town. Plaintiff and defendant state their cases, documents are inspected, and the informal gathering usually comes to a decision that is accepted by both parties. Unless the right is very certainly on one side or the other, a compromise is commonly suggested, and the judgment of their fellow-merchants is usually satisfactory to plaintiff and defendant, both sides have paid nothing for law, and the matter is settled quietly, in fact *in camerá*. The decision having been given and agreed to, a short formal agreement is drawn up, both parties affix their seals (they do not sign in Persia), as do the assessors their fellow-merchants. The document is then taken to one of the high legal or religious authorities, such as the Sheikh-ul-Islam or the Imaum-i-Juma; he affixes his seal and enters the judgment on his records as accepted by the parties; a few silver coins only are expended in this matter. Custom requires that a small present, such as a lamb or a loaf of sugar, should be sent to the chief of the merchants; the matter is ended definitely, and both plaintiff and defendant express their gratitude by a dinner or breakfast to their fellow-merchants the assessors. In the very unusual event of one of the parties being dissatisfied, he appeals to the justice of the local governor of the province. Or if the judgment be manifestly a corrupt or illegal one, he publishes his

wrongs in the bazaar, and he and his fellow-merchants address an indignant round-robin to the local head of the law, the governor of the province, or even to the Shah himself.

In a similar manner and with similar results, disputes respecting the boundaries of land, the supply of water to which each field or garden is entitled—a most important matter in the East—are referred to mejlisses of farmers, the village greybeards, who are presided over by their head-man, the ketkhoda or chief of the village. Here, too, an appeal may be made to the ground-landlord, to some legal or religious luminary, then to the governor of the province, lastly to the Shah himself as the fountain of justice.

Questions as to title to freehold lands and houses, if the friends and relatives of the parties are unable to settle them by arbitration, go at once to the Sheikh-ul-Islam or to one of the mushtaheds or religious lawyers. As these matters admit of a specious answer in their favour being given to both sides, the dissatisfied litigant gets an opinion in his own favour from a rival legal luminary. And then, as before, the affair comes within the jurisdiction of the provincial governor.

In the same way all matters respecting wills and the estates of intestates, and the affairs of minors, come first to the local legal authorities, who usually differ. The governor in these cases is called upon to cut the knot.

As a rule plaintiff and defendant, accompanied by all their relations, present themselves at the public audience of the provincial governor; they and all their followings all speak at once; they rave, they tear their

hair, clothes, and beards: Pandemonium let loose is a joke to the scene at the first appearance in court of the rival suitors. They are usually dismissed till some more convenient time, when substantial justice is promised them. The governor impounds all papers, and the court is adjourned. Now both sides proceed to systematically bribe, while the governor, by means of his servants and courtiers, keeps both parties informed of the progress of the case; that is to say, as to how much has been paid and offered by the other side. As a rule, bribes are paid in coin and no credit given. Often the wealthier party outbids the poorer at once, and the only course open for the impecunious suitor is to interest some high religious or legal functionary in the justice of his claim, by a bribe contingent on the success of the briber. Unless, however, the matter is one of flagrant injustice, the high dignitary is loth to break through the golden rule in Persia, that a bribe should be a cash transaction. But it must be remembered that where there is real injustice, the great doctor of law or religion is only too glad to interest himself, for there will be an opportunity for him to obtain credit and popularity by appearing for once with clean hands, as the champion of justice to the poor man. In the meanwhile the local governor consults several of the authorities in law and religion as to the points in dispute, and they on their part, by means of their acquaintances or servants, manage to secure a share of the spoil. At their numerously-attended unofficial levées, they hint at the correct decision from *their* point of view, and quote the authorities, giving chapter and verse; much

as our consulting barristers do. They even give a written opinion, to which they will attach their seals for a fee (or bribe) varying in amount according to the sum in dispute or the position of the giver of the opinion.

The appointed day arrives ; plaintiff and defendant are attended by a large retinue of friends, relatives, and sympathizers, each partly calling heaven to witness the justice of their case, and confident of a verdict, either from the nature of the evidence, the amount of bribes they have administered, the value or number of the written legal opinions they can produce, or possibly influenced by all of these considerations.

After some delay, in which the servants and hangers-on of the great man extract what they can from the suitors, they are ushered into the presence of the provincial governor, perhaps a son or uncle of the King, maybe an inexperienced boy ; this does not much matter, as the vizier, well versed in the arts of chicanery and deceit, is at his elbow to prompt a specious judgment. Plaintiff and defendant state their cases, either themselves, by a friend, or infrequently by a vakeel or substitute, often a professional lawyer. Documents and opinions are examined, witnesses are heard and at times on oath ; a whispered conference takes place between the governor, the vizier, and the chiefs of the law and religion, who are seated or standing around the great man. As a rule the governor, remember, has been well bribed, and generally pretty equally by both sides. He now delivers judgment on the merits of the case, generally a fair one. As to the law of the matter, he has been well primed

by his assessors. He dare not give a manifestly unjust decision, for public opinion would be too strong for him, and an appeal to the King might cause him to be heavily fined. So he judges according to his lights, gives his reasons, places his judgment in writing, and seals it; and unless manifestly unjust the assessors, the legal and religious men, counterseal it too. Often it is a compromise, for a compromise to a certain extent satisfies both parties. The judgment is always specious, if not profound.

The matter is now over. The governor openly takes a tenth, *as his right*, of the sum in dispute, and plaintiff and defendant are hustled out of the court. Appeals will lie to the crown, but they are very rare; for litigants are well aware of their immense cost, and that to obtain a reversal of the judgment of the provincial governor, backed as it is by the fiat of the local legal and religious magnates, would be extremely unlikely.

In the rare cases which by their importance really go to the judgment of the "Asylum of the Universe," as the Shah is termed by his subjects, not even the shells remain for the litigants: oystershells and all are swallowed and rapidly digested by the "King of Kings."

When, however, a crying injustice is done, a petition to the King is presented by some legal or religious personage at the Court, together with a large present or bribe; in this case the iniquitous judgment is usually reversed, through the pressure used by the great religious and legal dignitaries at Teheran, the governor in a flagrant case being very heavily fined, and compelled to disgorge.

Thus by a tortuous path substantial justice is after a time obtained, but, as we stated at first, law is usually avoided by a recourse to friendly arbitration. We must remember, too, that the heavy sums expended by the Asiatic in bribes can never equal what the Englishman willingly pays in fees, costs, charges, *et hoc genus omne*. Both arrive at their end, but by different roads. One thing must not be forgotten : that though a Persian will lie through thick and thin, he will very seldom take a false oath ; this simplifies matters considerably.





CHAPTER VII.

MARRIAGE: THE CONTRACT.

Women's out-door dress—The veil—Persian flirts—Marriage-brokers
—Akd—The ceremony—Settlements.

Love at first sight is unusual in a country where the women are habitually veiled, and a glimpse even of a lady's face is seldom to be got, save by stratagem or by what is considered immodest—the raising of the corner of her veil by the lady herself. Shrouded as she is from head to foot in an immense sheet of blue, two yards square, a yet further precaution must be taken. Over all this is placed a ruh-band or veil—no transparent or flimsy device, as in our own lace “fall,” or the thin and gauzy yashmak of the Turkish belle, serviceable alike to triumphant and to fading beauty. The ruh-band is a piece of white calico or cambric, a yard long, which hangs down like a long mask in front of the Persian woman's face, when clad in her hideous and purposely unbecoming outdoor costume: which costume, sad to say, is also an impenetrable disguise. In it all women are alike. An aperture four inches long, running transversely across the eyes, enables the Persian lady to see her way, and

little more; for even this aperture is covered by elaborate and curious embroidery, between the threads of which she can only peep. But the Persian belle will yet find a way of rewarding an admirer with a glance; and thus the marriages so carefully brought about by parents and relatives are not infrequently the result of predilections slyly manifested. The outdoor dress, being a disguise, cuts both ways; and the *intrigante* amuses herself with impunity.

Certain marriages take place because in the eyes of Orientals they are natural ones, such as the union of first cousins. The children have been like brother and sister from the cradle, and they are married as a matter of course; it is their fate, and they submit to it. But outside these marriages of custom, and far more numerous than the marriages of predilection to which we have referred, are the marriages usually arranged by "brokers." These brokers are old women, who always keep themselves in a position to quote the state of the marriage-market, which fluctuates. In hard times, even girls of good appearance are comparatively a drug. In time of plenty, they "rule firm." The marriage-broker is ever a welcome guest where there are daughters to marry, and also in houses where the sons wish to find a suitable bride. The young people are not consulted by the broker. She deals with the parents, and generally with the mothers. Crafty as a horse-dealer, she runs glibly over the various advantages, mental, physical, and pecuniary, of her *clientèle* of both sexes. So-and-so is a steady, quiet man. Such-an-one has brilliant prospects—has (important consideration!) no other wife. As for Yusuf,

how good-looking he is ! And Hassan, no man was ever so good-tempered. Of the other sex she sings the praises no less. The skill of Bēbē as a house-keeper, the wealth of the ugly daughter of the banker, the dangerous charms of the portionless Zuleikha, she can never say too much about. Her main business is to bargain for the sum to be paid to the father for his daughter's hand ; a sum which is usually expended by that father in pots and pans (all of copper) and other utensils, which he presents to his child as her separate property. The details being settled after much haggling, the young people are engaged, and the marriage-broker gets her commission both from the parents of the bridegroom and those of the bride-elect. Among the poor and the labouring classes the bargain is arranged on other grounds. The peasant takes a wife for her thews and sinews, or her skill at weaving carpets or making cheese ; while the bridegroom is or is not eligible according as he may be capable of hard work, or may hold some small office, or have a bit of land or a shop. Here the "marriage-broker" is generally an amateur, who conducts the negotiations purely from that love of match-making which is such a blessing to the world.

The akd, or marriage contract, is simply a legal form ; but it is marriage and not betrothal. A few friends are invited ; the bride—perhaps a child of ten—is seated in a room with her parents and relations ; over the door hangs the usual curtain. Or, if the ceremony takes place in one room or the open air, the women are all veiled. At the other side of the curtain, in an outer room or in the open air, are the male

guests; and here squats the moollah or priest of the quarter, who now drones out in a monotonous voice the marriage contract, which has been previously drawn out by him. "It is agreed between Hassan the draper, who is vakeel (agent) for Houssein the son of the baker, that he, Houssein, hereby acknowledges the receipt of the portion of Nissa the daughter of Achmet the grocer." Here follows a list of the property of the bride in lands, moneys, houses, cattle, dresses, furniture, carpets, pots, pans, and so on. Always a copy of the Koran and a certain weight of sewing-silk are mentioned. This detailed account of her property, constituting the woman's separate estate, her husband merely holds in trust during their cohabitation. At death or divorce it goes back again to herself or her heirs. And it is this mehr, or separate estate, that renders secure the otherwise precarious position of the Eastern wife in a polygamous country; for the various things enumerated, though acknowledged by the husband as received, may only exist on paper. Still, he has acknowledged them; and if he wish to put away his wife, or if they separate by consent, he is bound to refund the mehr of which he has legally acknowledged the receipt, or to obtain her legal discharge for the same. "And," continues the moollah, "he acknowledges the receipt of the aforesaid mehr." Then follows a hum of delight at the extent of the lady's property. "You, Hassan, how do you say as vakeel for Houssein—is this so?"—"Yes, yes, I agree," mumbles Hassan. "And you, Achmet, do you give your daughter, Lady Nissa, to be the wife of Lord Houssein?" "Yes, yes, I agree," replies Achmet

the grocer. "And you, Lady Nissa, are you there?" "Yes, yes, she is here, moollah," replies a chorus of women from behind the curtain. "And you agree, Lady Nissa?" Here there is a giggle from the child-bride. "Yes, yes, she agrees," comes in a triumphant chorus from the women. "Then," says the moollah, solemnly, "in the name of God the compassionate, the merciful, and of Mahommed the prophet of God, I declare you, Lord Houssein, and you, Lady Nissa, to be man and wife." Here the moollah puts his stamp or seal to the document: the various parties seal it too, it is carefully witnessed, and formally completed. The moollah receives his fee of a few shillings; and then, and not till then, he hands over the document—her settlement and "marriage-lines" in one—to the agent of the bride or to her father.

The legal ceremony is over; the young people are married fast, fast as the Mahommedan law can bind. And, theoretically, as yet they have never seen each other's faces. But really Houssein has had many a glimpse of the fair Nissa: her mother has often allowed him to see her child from behind a curtain or a cupboard-door. All this is understood. And the young people are now legally married. The wedding, as distinct from the espousals, may take place the same evening, in a week, a month, or not for years, according to the age, rank, or circumstances of the bride and bridegroom. Men and women feast separately; and after many water-pipes have been smoked, many pounds of sweetmeats consumed, and a plentiful banquet has been disposed of, the guests separate. All promise to be present at the actual wedding. No

music, no rejoicings—nothing but what we have described is seen at the ceremony we have detailed. The actual wedding is a scene of joy and merriment curious in the extreme ; but this must be described in another chapter.





CHAPTER VIII.

MARRIAGE: THE WEDDING.

Preparations for arūsee or wedding—Decoration of water—Sherbets
—Refreshments—Music—Songs—Procession of the bride.

FROM an early hour in the morning of an arūsee or wedding—I speak of a wedding in the middle ranks of life—there has been considerable bustle in the house of the bride's father. The house has been literally swept and garnished. Carpets have been borrowed, and rooms that at other times are unused and empty are now furnished and decorated with flowers. The poor are standing in a crowd at the outer door, sure of being plentifully regaled. The outer court has been got ready for the men. Vases of flowers are placed in rows at all the open windows and in every recess; thirty or forty pounds of tobacco has been prepared by pounding and moistening for smoking; the courtyard is freshly watered. If it be a calm day—and spring and summer days in Persia are always free from wind—rose-leaves are sprinkled on the surface of the water of the raised tank in the centre of the courtyards, so as to form the word "Bismillah,"* the pious welcome of the Mussulman. Similar preparations, but on a larger

* In the name of God.

scale, have been made in the *anderūn*, that handsomer and larger courtyard which contains the women's quarters. In this courtyard the negresses may be seen busily engaged in the kitchen preparing the breakfast for perhaps a hundred guests; and the visitors will stop all day, only leaving to escort the bride to the home of her new husband, whither she will go after dark. Large samovars, or Russian urns, which are in use in every Persian house, are hissing like small steam-engines, ready to furnish tea for the guests on their arrival: not our idea of tea, but a pale infusion sweetened to the consistency of syrup, from the centre of each cup of which will project a little island of superfluous sugar. The *sherbet-dar too*, is preparing in his own especial den immense quantities of ices and sherbets; and these ices will be served from china bowls, and each ice will be the size and shape of a fair-sized sugar-loaf. As for the sherbets (delicately scented and sweetened fruit-syrups dissolved in water, and with lumps of ice floating in the clear and various-coloured fluids), they will be supplied in gallons. Orange, sherbet, lemon, pomegranate, rose-water, cherry, quince, and an endless further variety of these refreshing drinks will be offered to the thirsty guests. And now come the musicians in two bands, the Mussulman, and the Jews'; the latter a ragged and motley crew, but more skilful than their better-clad rivals. They carry with them their strange old-world instruments, and soon establish themselves in a corner of either courtyard. They, too, partake of tea, and then prepare to strike up. Noticeable among the Mussulman musicians is the *dohol* player and his instrument. It

is a species of big drum, only used at weddings ; and, once heard, the awful resonant roar it makes can never be forgotten.

All is ready ; the master of the house, dressed in his best, gives a last anxious glance at the preparations, and has an excited discussion with his wife or wives. He waves his hand to the musicians, and hurries to a seat near the door, to be ready to welcome his guests ; the music strikes up a merry tune (it is really an air—barbaric, but inspiring) ; the tremendous din of the dohol is heard at intervals. Then in a loud scream rises the voice of the principal solo singer, who commences one of the sad love songs of Persia in a high falsetto voice. His face reddens with his exertions, which last through a dozen verses. His eyes nearly start from his head, the muscles of his neck stand out like ropes ; but he keeps correct time on the big tambourine, which he plays with consummate skill. The rest of the musicians watch his every movement, and all join in the chorus of “Ah ! Leila, Leila, you have made roast meat of my heart !” The music is the signal to the invited guests ; they now commence to arrive in crowds. The music and singing proceed, and go on unceasingly till the bride leaves for her husband’s home some ten hours after the artists begin. As the guests pour in, the host receives them with transports of pleasure—all the extravagant compliments of Eastern politeness pass between them. “May your wedding be fortunate !” “You are indeed welcome ; this is a never-to-be-forgotten honour to me, your slave !” In they pour, the men in their best ; the women, closely veiled, pass on unnoticed by the men

into the *anderūn*, where they unveil and appear to their delighted hostesses in their finest clothes and all their jewellery; and, we are sorry to add, in most cases with their faces carefully painted. As the dresses worn among Persian ladies for indoor use only reach to the knee and are very much *bouffé*, their wearers look like opera dancers. The ladies' feet and legs are bare, as a rule; a gauze shirt of gay colour and a tiny *zouave* jacket daintily embroidered with gold lace on velvet or satin are worn, while the head is decorated with a large kerchief of silk or gauze, elaborately embroidered with gold thread. From beneath this kerchief the hair falls in innumerable plaits behind, sometimes reaching almost to the ground. The colours of their clothes are of the brightest—pinks, greens, yellows, scarlets, crimsons, blues. The quantity of solid jewellery worn in honour of the bride is prodigious.

Every one takes tea, every one crunches the sweets of various kinds which are piled on china dishes in huge trays in the centre of the rooms. Several hundred-weight of confectionery—not food, but “sweets”—are thus consumed. Conversation goes on, pipes are smoked by both men and women. Messages pass between the two courtyards. But the men remain in their quarters, and the women in theirs. The musicians and buffoons are allowed, however, in the women's court on these occasions: they are supposed to be mere professional persons, and on this account are tolerated. At noon a heavy breakfast is served. If there be two hundred guests, there is meat for them and for, say, four hundred servants and hangers-on,

while what remains, a still larger portion, is given to the poor.

Lūtis or buffoons now bring their performing monkeys or bears—often a miserable and half-starved lion cowed by much beating. They dance, they sing songs, indecent enough in themselves, but tolerated in the East on such occasions. More tea, more ices, more sherbet, more sweets. Pipes without number pass from hand to hand, but no strong drink; that is never seen or tasted, save by the musicians and buffoons, who as the day wanes are freely supplied. The bride meanwhile goes to the bath, whither she is accompanied by many of the ladies, the friends and near relatives of the family. Dinner is served on the same lavish scale as the breakfast. Fowls by the hundred, boiled to rags, under piles of various-coloured rice; lambs roasted whole, or boiled in fragments; mutton in savoury stews; game and venison hot on the spit; kabābs and pillaws of endless variety; soups, sweets, fruit in profusion: all this is served with the lavishness of true Oriental hospitality.

And now there is a hum of suspense. It is night; and the whole place is lighted up by lamps, candles in shades, and lanterns. A noise of a distant crowd is heard; alms in money are freely distributed among the crowd of beggars and poor at the door; horses are brought for the bride and her friends. The procession of the bridegroom is approaching: and it must be understood that another grand party has been going on at *his* father's house. The musicians play and sing their loudest: the roofs (the flat roofs of the East) are thronged by all the women and children of the quarter.

The bridegroom and his friends arrive, and are welcomed by the women with a peculiar echoing cry of "Kel lel lel," produced by tapping the cheeks. Then the bride appears, carefully veiled in a huge sheet of pink and spangled muslin. She goes to the door and mounts a gaily-caparisoned horse. All the male guests join the procession. Lighted cressets full of blazing embers are carried on high poles to lead and light the way. The lanterns of all the guests are lighted and borne in this procession, which joyfully wends its way through a cheering crowd. At the moment the bride leaves her father's house a shout of "Kel lel lel" announces the fact. Fireworks blaze, the music is deafening, above all is heard the monotonous banging of the wedding drum. And so, the buffoons and musicians leading the way, the procession slowly moves on. As it approaches the house of the bridegroom several sheep are sacrificed in honour of the bride; they are slain at her feet as she steps over her husband's threshold for the first time, accompanied by a female friend or two. Then, invoking blessings on the pair, all wend their way home, and the festival is over.





CHAPTER IX.

MARRIED LIFE IN PERSIA.

Marriages, how arranged—Polygamy—Divorce—The young wife—
Mothers-in-law—Sterility—Veils—Occupations—Pilgrimages
—Burials of women.

WOMAN in Persia is popularly supposed to be a veiled, bejewelled being, the slave and toy of a jealous lord ; her natural end the sack, the bowstring, or a despised old age. All this is a mistake.

In Persia a girl marries to fill the place of her husband's confidant and friend ; to rule his household, if she be capable of ruling it ; and, above all things, to be a mother of children. As happens elsewhere, the marriages of the rich are generally dictated by policy ; while those of the middle and lower classes are often arranged by the parents. What we term love-matches are the exception. Persians as a rule try to arrange what they consider suitable matches for their children. Polygamy is the exception, and where there are two or more wives there are also two or more establishments. Neither lodgings, money, servants, clothes, nor jewels are held in common : and the only source of contention is the society of the husband. But the wives, instead of being jealous rivals, are usually the best of friends.

While it is quite true that theoretically a man can be rid of his wife by saying before witnesses "Thou art divorced," yet practically to obtain a divorce in Persia is almost as difficult as it is in Europe. In Persia the poorest of women does not marry without a settlement, which has to be made good in case of divorce; and at her marriage her relatives exact from the husband an acknowledgment of a far larger portion than is actually paid to him. It is the liability to pay this, the "mehr," that restrains the husband from divorce save on the strongest grounds. In cases where mutual distaste is very strong, and divorce desired by both parties, the matter is simply arranged by the wife agreeing not to exact the whole or even a part of her settlement. There is another safeguard against frivolous divorce: a divorced man or woman does not find it easy to make a respectable marriage.

The marriage of first cousins is the favourite union. The reason is that cousins have been acquaintances and friends from childhood, while to all the rest of the world save her brothers and sisters the young girl is a veiled mystery; so that, unless there is a mutual disinclination or too great a disparity of age, the Persian youth looks naturally to the "daughter of my uncle" as his future wife. Often the cousins are betrothed from childhood. As a rule, classes do not mingle in marriage. The sons of merchants wed merchants' daughters, the young tradesman mates with his like, and so with the members of the servant and soldier classes. But in Persia, as everywhere else, extraordinary personal attractions soon become known and have their advantage. The beauty of the lower or

middle classes need not aspire in vain. The mother of the King's eldest and favourite son, the most powerful man in Persia, was the daughter of a miller, who caught the Shah's eye while washing clothes at the brook-side. Many a poor and handsome girl is wedded without portion, for her beauty's sake.

The young wife does not immediately assume the responsibilities of her position. Carefully tended as a bride for the first year of her wedded life, she willingly remains under the tutelage of her mother-in-law, if she have one; or if she be the daughter of a widow, her mother usually accompanies her to her new establishment. Mothers-in-law have a better time in Persia than in some other countries. There they are regarded as the natural guardians of the inexperienced bride, and the proper care-takers of the young mother and her infant offspring. From the mother-in-law are learnt the arts of housekeeping. Under her eyes all purchases are made from the huckster or the female pedlar; for a visit to the bazaar by a young wife before she has blessed her husband with children would be considered a scandal among the upper, middle, or tradesman class. Only among the very poor or the villagers does the girl-wife, save on ceremonial occasions, leave the shadow of her husband's roof-tree during the first year of her marriage.

But the first year of wifhood has passed away, and relatives and friends have been summoned to celebrate the happy birth of a son or daughter. If the former, then indeed is the position of the wife a happy one. She receives the congratulations of her friends and acquaintances, and holds high festival. Her husband

dignifies her by the title of "Mother of Hassan," or whatever the little one's name may be, and from that day her own name is no longer used. If she is only blessed with a daughter, still she is not cursed with sterility, that terror of the Oriental woman; and she can hope that heaven may yet bless her with a son.

Now the wife's authority begins to be more felt in the household. She asserts herself, as the mother of the heir; for heir he is, if his heirship be only a melon-stall or a huckster's pack. The glories of the bride pale in the stronger rays of the mother of the son of the house. Closely veiled, as are all the respectable women of Persian towns, she may now go abroad, being invariably accompanied by her child and her mother, or her mother-in-law. Friends are entertained at home, and picnics and sojourns in the cool and leafy gardens which surround most Persian towns help to render a somewhat monotonous life very enjoyable. Leaving the details of housekeeping to her mother-in-law, the Persian wife confines herself to friendly criticism and to playing a judicious second fiddle. But on the death of the old lady, the wife naturally takes her proper place as head of the household, and generally exerts a strong influence over the conduct of her husband's affairs. Consulted in all matters, the Persian wife is her husband's trusted confidante and counsellor, as most good English wives are. "But she is veiled, the poor thing, closely veiled!" exclaims the pitying Englishwoman. Yes, she is veiled. And loth would she be to part with what she looks on as a distinction and a privilege. To her the veil is the badge of modesty and the token of respectability.

And has she any accomplishments, any education ; or is she merely the mother of the children ? These questions are easily answered. Many of the Persian middle-class women are highly educated, according to Oriental ideas. They read and often write poetry ; they sing and play, as a rule, well, and are mistresses of all the arts of plain and fancy needlework ; cooking is second nature to them ; pastry-making and confectionery are among their pleasures. The accomplishments of the poor ones are naturally of a more useful kind. They are good cooks and bread-bakers ; they make the clothes of the entire household ; they often are able to add largely to the daily income by their knowledge of some business or trade ; and none of them are idle.

Of course Persian women have their faults, the faults of their sex : they are fond of scandal ; they often quarrel with each other ; they are at times jealous. But taken altogether they are virtuous, economical, cleanly, and do all they well can do to make their homes happy. In most cases they are idolised by their husbands and children.

As the young wife ages into the mature matron she gradually assumes a more important position in the household. To her falls the entire care and responsibility of the housekeeping, even the feeding of the horses often being attended to under her orders. On her devolves the duty of selecting wives for her sons, and of looking out for husbands for her daughters. There is another duty that at times falls to the lot of the childless Persian wife : she has to find some one as a wife for her own lord and master. For herself, she

rapidly ages. There is no Ninon de l'Enclos in Persia. With the appearance of a well-developed woman in girlhood, the Oriental woman looks quite old at forty, and at that age commences a desperate use of fards and every description of ornament. "Adorned with false eyebrows, false teeth, and false hair," she still attempts to retain the affections of her husband, and sometimes succeeds. Should he be of a religious turn, she will not hesitate to accompany him in an open pannier over thousands of miles of desert, on one of those long pilgrimages which are generally the crowning act of the middle-aged Oriental. To Mecca, to Kerbela, to Meshed, to each and every shrine, the female pilgrim is a frequent traveller.

We have now reviewed the Persian woman's existence from her marriage to the grave, to which she is at length borne by her sorrowing relatives, and decently interred. If she be a wealthy woman, after the lapse of a few months she will be carefully exhumed and her coffin, wrapped in various rolls of felt, will be sent with many hundreds of other coffins, containing the dead of both sexes, to lie in the holy burying-places of Meshed or Kerbela, secure of a good place at the Resurrection, and in happy proximity to the great Mussulman saints near whom she has been buried at so much trouble and expense.





CHAPTER X.

THE GRAVE OF FAITHLESS WOMEN.

The Well of Death—Family council—Private execution (or murder)
—Outraged husbands—Justice—The Well—Execution of a
woman.

SINDBAD the Sailor had many curious adventures, but none more striking to the youthful mind than that of his being lowered into a deep well, cut in the top of an exceedingly high mountain, with the body of his deceased wife. His strange escape and his other extraordinary adventures all pale before the horror of his description of the Well of Death.

Few are aware that in this nineteenth century, close to Shiraz, about a couple of miles from the tombs of the poets Saadi and Hafiz, there exists at the top of what in England would be called a mountain a veritable Well of Death. Into this well faithless wives are flung—not secretly or by night, but by day publicly, in the presence of a well-pleased crowd, and by the hands of the public executioner. It is true that in our days recourse to this awful punishment is infrequent. The average Oriental prefers to divorce a faithless wife; or, after calling a sort of family council, he will himself carry out the stern sentence of custom upon

his faithless spouse, with a lump of opium, or a little arsenic or corrosive sublimate. Should he resolve on this course, the woman's own mother will applaud him, and even aid him should there be need for it; while as for the wife herself, she will generally accept with readiness the more merciful alternative of poison offered her by her husband and her blood-relations. If she does not, every house has its well and its lofty roof; and in Persia there are no coroners, and all the people are fatalists.

But at times the actual casting into the Well of Death does take place. Scandal, perhaps, has been very busy, the faithless wife has powerful enemies, or the governor of the province wishes to inaugurate a golden age. Generally some fortuitous combination of circumstances, with the needful one of an indignant husband, causes resort to the awful punishment. Perhaps the relatives of the wife take her part; perhaps there are faults on both sides; perhaps a divorce is resisted. The law is appealed to. The husband literally, not metaphorically, having put ashes on his head, demands justice on his erring wife. The whole town is in an uproar, and the evidence is perhaps overwhelming. The governor postpones the decision, in the hope of some pecuniary arrangement being made; but, no: the outraged husband hies to the great religious dignitaries. The woman, relegated to the charge of some great moollah, does not assert her innocence, or in her despair glories in her guilt. Her relatives entreat her to take poison, or even attempt to poison her. The governor tries to avoid being mixed up in the matter, and sends for some of the chief priests, who

do not always err on the side of mercy. The woman is undoubtedly guilty. Is an example needed? Alas, yes! "Let her be taken to the Well of Ali Bunder and cast in." The governor signs the order.

Some two miles from Shiraz, near the tombs of the poets, is a large garden—that of Dilgoosha (Heartsease). In this garden, under its luxuriant orange-trees, the Shirazis are accustomed to picnic all the year round; and from this garden a stiff climb brings you to the Well of Death. What the origin of this well was; who made it; whether it was a place for the drawing of water, a kind of granary, or a mine is doubtful. No one knows its age. No one has sounded its depths successfully. No one knows if it be a dry well, or if there be water in its depths. Every child in Shiraz knows it; every child has flung pebbles in, listening to the sounding echoes as the stones fell into its unfathomed depths. And with a curse the little one has spat, by its mother's instigation, into the "grave of faithless women." There it is, a great square yawning hole in the grey rock, with no balustrade. The sparse mountain herbage is trodden away around its brink by generations of the curious who have peeped down in awe.

It is not so very long since the punishment was carried out. The wretched woman was placed on a donkey, bare-headed, her face to the tail. Her hair, the Persian woman's chief glory, was shaven; her face, formerly so jealously veiled, was bare. The donkey was led by the executioner in his red robe of office. Preceding the wretched victim were the hired musicians, buffoons, and dancers of the town, and a few of the

lower and more abandoned of the female riffraff of a great Eastern city. The rest of a huge crowd was made up of a mob of men and boys, who shouted and laughed as if they were about to attend some fair. Horsemen, too, rode with the shouting crowd as far as the foot of the steep hill. The farrash-bashi (literally, chief carpet-spreader), the principal executive (police) officer of the governor of the province, with a few policemen, seemed to be among the few respectable persons present: he, of course, attended in his official capacity. Ribald songs were sung by the hired buffoons and the musicians played their loudest, as all scrambled up the mountain-track. The prisoner was half-dragged, half-carried up by two of the executioner's assistants, for the path is too steep for any beast of burden. Poor wretch! she had been mercifully half-stupefied with opium. The mob at length reached the top. The woman was seated, her hands bound behind her back, at the very brink of the well. She was told to recite the Mussulman profession of faith: "There is no God but God. Mahommed is the apostle of God." She was silent; some one muttered it for her. The executioner, half-drunken as he was, as is the custom in Persia, to nerve him to his work, stepped forward. "Begone!" he shouted, spurned her with his foot, and she disappeared.

There is the well. It may be used to-morrow; it may be never used again—let us hope not. These executions are happily not common; and year by year, as Persia is more and more subject to the criticism of the West, will become yet rarer. Do they have a deterrent effect? Not the least. The volatile ladies

of Shiraz make a jest of the grave of faithless women, and their husbands in joke threaten them with it. Punishments of women in the East, and especially in Persia, are very uncommon. There is no women's side to the gaols in Persia; and during the last twenty years there have not been six executions of women, probably.





CHAPTER XI.

THE PARADISE OF SLAVES.

Slaves, how they arrive—Varieties of slaves—A whipping-boy—
Kind treatment of slaves—Position—Eunuchs—Marrage of
Eunuchs.

KHIVA has earned a terrible name for the atrocities perpetrated upon its slaves. In contrast to the cruel treatment of slaves in the khanate is the treatment of the negro in Persia. There the possession of one or more slaves is the sign of respectability. "He must be respectable—he owns a slave," is said in Persia. Slaves in that country are luxuries. Except in the establishments of the wealthy, not more than one or two negresses are held, and the possession of a male slave means much the same thing as keeping a man-servant in England.

The slaves imported into Persia come viâ the Persian Gulf, and are brought from the Red Sea littoral in the native craft termed buggallows. The Arab owners of these craft are generally successful in running the contraband article. Notwithstanding the careful patrolling of the Persian Gulf by our gun-boats, slaves are imported at a rate which keeps abreast of the demand. Another way by which slaves are frequently

introduced is by the returning pilgrims from Mecca, who bring with them young black women as wives or servants. These nominal servants and wives, coming as they do of their own free will, are seldom if ever detected as slaves; and, of course, once on Persian soil nothing more can be said. There are no large slave-dealers and no slave-markets in Persia, neither are there any white slaves; the few Turkoman prisoners taken on the frontier being always exchanged for Persian captives, and never retained in bondage.

Slaves in Persia are classed according to race, and, as a rule, are bought while they are under age. They are of three kinds. The Bombassi—the ink-black African, with thick lips, woolly hair, and small intelligence, who comes from the interior of Africa—is of the least value. The boys are purchased as grooms and house-drudges; the girls as cooks, housemaids, and nurses. They are stupid, lazy, and gluttonous, but very affectionate. By the Persians they are supposed never to develop any other talent than that of cookery; but they are strong, and they are cheap. The price of a Bombassi boy is about £12; that of a healthy girl of twelve, a third more. The next variety is the Soheili, who are less dark in complexion, with lips less thick and hair less woolly; and they are altogether of a more intelligent type. Of these, the men become body-servants; the women, maids to the Persian ladies; or, if passably good-looking, they are often taken as segahs, or wives of the lower grade, by the merchant or tradesman class; but in the latter case they remain the legal property of the husband, though not subject to seizure for debt, the form of marriage protecting them

from this contingency. They are more intelligent than the Bombassis, but less affectionate; though, as a rule, they are faithful to their master's interests. Generally brought up as the playfellows of the sons and daughters of the house, they become the favoured confidential servants of the young people as these grow up and have establishments of their own. Their value is half as much again as that of the Bombassis. The third and best kind of slaves are the Habasshis, or so-called Abyssinians. These are of a still higher type. The lips are thin, the colour light brown; there is often a distinct red in the cheeks; the hair is long, often nearly straight: both males and females have considerable pretensions to good looks. As much as £80 or £100 may be given for a healthy young Habasshi girl. As a rule, these girls are bought not as servants but as wives. Young Habasshis of both sexes are purchased by the grandees of Persia as playmates and confidential servants for their sons and daughters. The girls become the confidantes of their young mistresses, and ultimately occupy the position of housekeepers or wardrobe-women. The young Habasshi boys are the playfellows and fellow-students of their youthful masters, often fulfilling the duties of "whipping-boy." I have seen the little slave and playfellow of the Jellal-u-dowleh, the son of the King's eldest son, a child of three, wrestling with his infant master, to the great amusement of his father. The two children seemed quite like brothers; and I was told that the only way of keeping the young Prince in order was to threaten the slave with a whipping. The little black boy some day or other will be a great personage, as in all human

probability his master will be Shah of Persia. From this class of slave are taken the eunuchs (few nowadays) maintained by the nobility. The few eunuch children imported are eagerly purchased at double or treble the price of ordinary slaves. As a rule, the Habasshis are delicate, and feel the severe winter of Central and Northern Persia. The greatest care is taken of them. They do no real work, and it is not expected of them. They are well clad, and often the master or mistress glories in lavishing money on the dress of a favourite slave.

The master has nominally a power of life and death over his slave, but it is never exercised. A boy slave may have an occasional drubbing, or a girl a box on the ears; but cruelty is unknown. The worst punishment that can be inflicted on an idle, drunken, or peculating slave is to turn him adrift to work for his own living. The slave considers himself in a far higher position than the paid servants. Into the hands of slaves are consigned for safe custody jewels, moneys, and clothes. The house-steward or "nazir," a highly lucrative* post, is usually a slave. Slaves often amass considerable wealth, and could purchase their freedom if they would; but freedom is the last thing they desire. After a few years' service they have generally the offer of manumission, and very rarely avail themselves of it.

In Persia the colour of his skin brings no disfavour. The ordinary expression for a slave is a "black brother." He is seldom or never put to hard labour, and there are no black "field hands" in Persia.

Sometimes the Persian, by a fall in rank or through money losses, becomes unable to keep his slaves. Does

he sell them ? No ; that would be too degrading. He simply frees them ; and as a rule the slave is made a freed man very much against the grain. The Persian slave, then, is treated more as a child than as a slave. His master does not hesitate to mate him with his own daughter ; and frequently a prepossessing slave may become the legitimate mistress of a household, or even a favourite wife, ruling her less fortunate white rivals. The servants have to take their chance ; the warmest corner, the best food, the most solid and stylish clothing, are kept for the slave.

Eunuchs are owned only in the houses of the great and rich. Save in the harems of the Shah and his sons, one eunuch only rules over the flock of ladies, servants, slaves and children, who are all under his absolute authority. I have only known two white eunuchs in a long experience of Persia, and these men had probably been political offenders or the sons of political criminals. Political pretenders are also frequently blinded ; for in the East a blind king cannot reign. The eunuchs generally have their quarters in the harems themselves, and as a rule they seldom quit their precincts. When they do they are treated with great respect, on account of the powerful influence they wield. The ladies themselves always treat their guardian with the greatest respect, address him as "Master," and invite him to be seated. Like the high officers of State, he carries a long wand of office, and this wand is often encrusted with gems. He often attends the daily council of his master if he be a provincial governor, and there his advice is listened to with respect ; and he takes precedence of all except

the Minister, Vice-Governor, or Wuzeer. Of course he plunges his hand into the political pie, much to his own advantage. He never refuses a bribe. He may do nothing for it ; but, like the British box-keeper, his hand is ever open. The second eunuch of the heir-apparent of Persia is a good horseman, a favourite boon-companion, and a clever shot, generally popular as the prince of good fellows. But the eunuch ages soon. He is an old man at forty ; and once seen he is never to be mistaken—his sunken shoulders, his beardless face, and his hollow cough mark him out distinctly.

The chief vices of these gentlemen are greed and love of scandal, and they are often drunkards or opium-smokers. They almost always accumulate wealth. Dying rich, they generally bequeath their hoards to the master or his children. Sometimes they marry ; the late Koja Bashi, chief eunuch to the Zil-es-Sultan Agha Suliman, had two wives. He was very wealthy, and left his property to his widows. He was a successful gambler, and had a very fine stud of horses.

I think I have justified the title of this chapter. In Persia slaves are well fed, well clothed, and well treated ; the people look on them as equals, not inferiors ; colour is no degradation ; they are not put to hard labour ; the law is the same practically for them as for others. Mothers are not separated from their children, or husbands from wives. They soon become absorbed by marriage among the Persians ; and I can fancy no happier lot for the enslaved black than to be sold in Persia.



CHAPTER XII.

A PROFESSIONAL VISIT: MEDICINE IN PERSIA.

Ride to the House—Saddle-cover—Heart's-delight—The hanz—
The garden—The room—The ladies—Their costume—Refresh-
ments—Medicine in Persia—Surgery—Ancient remedies.

IN India the ladies are jealously veiled from the eyes of all men, and more particularly from the eyes of the unbelieving male; even the European doctor has no chance of seeing their dark faces, save in his dreams. In Persia this is not the case. Doctors are privileged persons. Possibly on his first visit, or if his patient be the wife of a holy man, she may be veiled; but afterwards the veil is cast aside. One great characteristic of the Persian is his curiosity; among Persian women it is developed in an intense degree. And that is why it is that the doctor is so often sent for. I shall not be guilty of indiscretion if I describe one of these quasi-professional visits.

I have been summoned to the house of a Persian grandee. In deference to Oriental prejudice I have discarded my linen cut-away coat, which from its shortness is considered indelicate, and substituted for it the professional black-cloth frock. I have slipped a pair of galoshes over my ordinary walking boots; and,

with my solar topee (or sun-helmet) on, have ridden through a mile of deserted streets and thronged bazaars, in a grilling sunshine, to the door of the patient's house. My groom flings the embroidered cloth of many colours, worked in gay silks, over my horse, to protect him from chills and the saddle from sun and dust. The drowsy doorkeeper politely requests me to bring my "Excellency's honour within;" and I pass through the outer parts of the house, which are devoted to the men, and distinguished principally by dirt, dark passages, and squalor. In various courts and rooms we notice men writing, smoking, talking or sleeping. Those occupied in the latter way predominate, for it is early afternoon. Most of the serious business of the day has been done, and the early-rising Persian is, as a rule, enjoying his siesta. The hour of afternoon tea, the delights of which have been known in Persia for over a century, has not yet arrived.

"Heart's-delight! Heart's-delight!" shouts our guide, as he reaches a grimy curtain, at the same time signalling me by a wave of the hand to advance no further. A scuttling of slippered feet is heard, and Heart's-delight, a hideous negress of middle age dressed in clean and bright print garments, raises the curtain. "In the name of God, you are welcome; you have been expected. One minute, Sahib, till I inform our lady," grins the black slave-woman. The curtain falls, and in the half-darkness of the passage the porter gazes at me and I gaze at the porter. "Negresses are the daughters of burnt fathers," he remarks; to which I reply "Yes, yes," as is the custom in the East on

hearing a self-evident proposition. Now we are aware of considerable commotion and shrill voices from behind the curtain, and, before I can be enlightened further by the door-porter on the subject of the daughters of burnt fathers, the curtain is again raised—this time to admit us. “Welcome, Sahib; pray enter; may your footsteps be fortunate!” Our guide, the sooty Heart’s-delight, precedes us.

I have been too long in the East to be caught gazing around me; but what I do see is this. A large courtyard some thirty yards by ten in extent. All down the centre is the hauz or tank—a raised piece of ornamental water, the surface of which is about two feet above the ground. The edges are formed of huge blocks of well-wrought stone, so accurately levelled that the hauz overflows all round its brink, making a pleasant sound of running water. Gold-fish of large size flash in shoals in the clear tank. On either side of it are long rectangular flower-beds, sunk six inches below the surface of the court. This pavement, which consists of what we should call pantiles, is clean and perfect, and freshly sprinkled; and the sprinkling, and consequent evaporation, makes a grateful coolness. In the flower-beds are irregular clumps of Marvel of Peru, some three feet high, of varied-coloured bloom, coming up irregularly in wild luxuriance. The moss-rose, too, is conspicuous, with its heavy odour; while the edging, a foot wide, is formed by thousands of bulbs of the *Narcissus poeticus* massed together like packed figs; these, too, give out a strong perfume. But what strikes one most is the air of perfect repair and cleanliness of everything. No grimy walls, no soiled curtains here;

all is clean as a new pin, all is spick and span. The courtyard is shaded by orange-trees covered with bloom, and the heavy odour of neroli pervades the place. Many of the last year's fruit have been left upon the trees for ornament, and hang in bright yellow clusters out of reach. A couple of widgeon sport upon the tank. All round the courtyard are rooms, the doors and windows of which are jealously closed; but as we pass we hear whispered conversations behind them and titters of suppressed merriment.

We reach the door of the principal apartment, the windows of which look down upon the whole length of the hauz. I cast off my galoshes at the door, but retain my head-gear, for to remove it would be the height of rudeness. Heart's-delight motions me to a seat on a chair (the only chair—Persians sit on the ground) at the head of the room. When I say that the interior of this apartment resembles the halls of the Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace, as they appeared in their first splendour before the great fire there, I exactly describe it. A priceless carpet, surrounded by felt edgings, two inches thick and a yard wide, appears like a lovely but subdued picture artfully set in a sombre frame. In the recesses of the walls are many bouquets in glass vases. The one great window—a miracle of intricate carpentry, some twenty feet by twenty—blazes with a geometrical pattern of tiny pieces of glass, forming one gorgeous mosaic. Three of the sashes of this window are thrown up to admit air; the coloured glass of the top and four remaining sashes effectually shuts out excess of light.

The *frou-frou* of silk is heard. Three ladies enter the room. Their feet and legs are bare to the knee, for they have cast off their shoes at the door; but all the rest of them is shrouded in a large sheet of dark-blue silk, the outer veil of the Persian lady. Gracefully they sink down into heaps in a semicircle opposite us. "Salaam, Sahib: you are welcome. Tea, tea for the Sahib!" I respond in the customary way, and inquire after the health of my veiled hostesses. One only replies in a confident tone—she is evidently of middle age, and self-possessed: the other two blue heaps shake with inward mirth, but are silent. "It cannot be, it is too hot!" the lady continues, as she casts off her dark-blue envelope—an example immediately followed by her companions. Heart's-delight hastily folds up the three veils; and a plump middle-aged lady, very comely, and her two innocent-looking daughters, handsome young women, fair as any English girl, with round chubby faces and magnificent eyes, are disclosed to view in all the splendour of the Persian lady's indoor dress. The costume of all is the same, varying only in colours, and these are of the gayest: short and voluminous skirts of silk, much *bouffé*, reaching to the knee; shirts (the Persian word, like the French *chemise*, is applied to the garment of both sexes) of transparent silk gauze; tiny zouave jackets of gaily-embroidered velvet, just covering the shoulders and the top of the back (of these the sleeves are unbuttoned from the elbow, hanging down and showing the gay linings of pale-coloured but brilliant silk); the top of the head and the ears are hidden by gorgeous silk kerchiefs, embroidered in gold; and there is no

more clothing to describe, unless the numerous bracelets of the bangle form, of gold and of glass, which jangle as the ladies move their arms, may be called clothes. The ladies chat: the younger ones only to each other in an undertone, for maiden modesty prevents their addressing the doctor; but they giggle and titter a good deal, and are duly reprov'd for it by the elder lady. Tea in delicate old china cups is served; we all smoke hubble-bubbles, and four of them are brought by Heart's-delight and three other black female slaves. Presently I hear a tittering behind me, I turn, and instantly there is dead silence as a bright curtain of shot-silk quickly falls, but not before I have observed an amused bevy of gaily-dressed women and children. "Excuse them, Doctor Sahib: they are so dull, so dull." Conversation turns upon the curious customs of Europeans. I am asked if I am married. I have to admit that I am not, and am duly pitied. But then, "After all, you are right. Where there is a woman there is discord," says my hostess. More tea; more pipes. Sweet cakes, confectionery and conserves are handed; iced sherbet, in Bohemian glass tumblers, gilt and of gaudy colours, is served. I insinuate something to the effect that this is a professional visit; my hostess smiles. I repeat the remark; and then the lady, rising to bid farewell, replies, "We were dull; we were bored; you have *désennuyé* us. Wallah!"—with a little laugh—"I have forgotten why we sent for you. Your footsteps, however, have been fortunate, for our hearts are no longer sad." So here was an end of my visit. We shook hands heartily, and the lady gave me a huge bouquet of narcissus as I left. As I

rode home through the glaring streets, I felt all the more clearly that I had been merely sent for out of curiosity. But the handsome little carpet I afterwards received as a fee, reconciled me to the experience, and caused me to remember that it is not in Persia alone that ladies summon a doctor simply because they are bored.

The system of medicine in vogue in Persia is a pure empiricism. Diseases and remedies are divided into two classes, *hot* and *cold*; a hot disorder being treated by the administration of cold remedies, and *vice versâ*. Diagnosis is not attempted; and if the ailment does not give way under the one class of drugs, the native practitioner simply tries the other. When the patient has obtained his prescription, he, after repeating a prayer, opens his Koran haphazard; and looking at the first passage to his right, or at some other part of the page that is previously decided on, he determines whether he shall act on it or not. Should the omen prove favourable, he swallows the dose, however large (a quart is a common quantity) or nauseous, in perfect faith, having previously fixed on a fortunate hour. This important point is settled by the astrologer, who is much consulted in this country, no important affair being undertaken without his advice, or commenced save at the particular moment that he may choose as fortunate. Prior to calling in the medical attendant, a list of the principal practitioners is gone through, and each one is tried with an omen as described, from the Koran, till he whose name coincides with some especially lucky verse is selected.

Charms written by dervishes (wanderers vowed to a mendicant life), and either the writing washed off into

water and swallowed, or the whole taken as a pill, or some form of prayer or incantation, are common; also propitiatory sacrifices, and, in case of the rich, money given to the poor, or to holy men. If the disorder prove obstinate, the bystanders each prescribe a remedy more or less ludicrous; and, save in the case of the very rich, or until the patient is *in extremis*, the European practitioner is seldom called in.

Purging, principally by means of calomel, is the almost universal commencement of treatment; for the Persian, like the sailor, thinks little of medicine unless it be heroic. This is followed by bleeding to at least twelve or eighteen ounces; this latter is generally repeated several times. The hakim now leaves his patient very much to nature, prescribing merely placebos, such as syrup of violets, or sugar-candy and water; and, as the Persian has a strong constitution, he often survives, the credit of the physician being in direct proportion to the violence and novelty of the remedies he has employed.

Besides the hot and cold classes of disease, an additional distinction is made into those of *harāret* (heat and inflammation) and *rūtūbut* (humidity). Bleeding and purging are the remedies for the former, but carried to such excess that they generally terminate the case; while large doses of quinine and powerful aromatics administered in wine, with warm infusions, are given for the latter.

The diet is carefully attended to, and particular things are forbidden, not so much for any harm they might do, but to give the hakim a scapegoat should his treatment fail.

The surgery of Persia is in a still lower condition ; and this is owing partly to the inferior status of the jerrah, or surgeon, who is generally either a barber or a farrier ; and partly to the great objection that the Persian has to all operations which result in mutilation ; for amputation of the arms, feet, or hands is the common punishment of theft, and the mutilated person is considered infamous. Hence it is rare that a Persian of the lower class will consent to them, while the upper ranks of society are, of course, less liable to require these operations.

When amputation is performed by a native, the primitive methods observed in Europe before the invention of the ligature are in use. The limb is struck off by repeated blows of a mallet on a chopper or short sword, or, in case of a finger or toe, a razor, and then dipped into pitch or oil which is boiling. Lithotomy is frequently performed above the pubes, and is always fatal.

Chloroform is unknown, save by legend, and is called "spirit of insensibility," and is supposed to be possessed of the marvellous properties attributed to the "benj" of the 'Arabian Nights.' The administration of it is attended with danger, the medical officer to the Residency of Bushire having narrowly escaped a pistol-shot from a tribesman on seeing his relative apparently put to death by the unknown drug.

The bone-setter is in better repute than the surgeon, and enjoys considerable popularity. He always informs the patient that his limb is either fractured or dislocated ; and even should the injury be merely a bruise or sprain, he wraps it up in bandages smeared

with yolk of egg; or, should he have diagnosed a fracture, with bitumen (mūm yai), which latter is supposed to possess almost miraculous properties; and he keeps the limb in a state of perfect rest so long as the patient will pay for his visits. The results of this are limbs of various degrees of shortness and curvature, ankyloses, etc.; but, by this mode of treatment, the bone-setter has the credit with the simple of working extraordinary cures, and I have been gravely shown supposed united fractures of the femur and humerus after five days' bandaging. Splints are quite unknown, while compound fractures generally result in gangrene and death, though at times they are brought to what is considered a *successful* termination by the spontaneous separation by mortification of the distal extremity of the limb, leaving an useless stump.

During illness, the chances of recovery of the patient are diminished by his being surrounded by numbers of friends and acquaintances, who smoke noisy water-pipes, and continually drink tea and converse, never leaving him, day or night, until he is either dead or convalescent. These friends consult with the patient, if he be in a state to do so, on the expediency of following his physician's treatment, and nothing is administered without the approval of a majority of the bystanders. As the disorder increases in intensity, so do the friends, neighbours, and passers-by increase in number, till, at the decease of the patient, it is no uncommon thing to find eighty people in the room, and two or three hundred in the house.

Midwifery is in the hands of the Jewesses and old women.

Lunacy is not common. Idiots and harmless lunatics, being looked upon as persons of peculiar sanctity, are allowed to wander about unmolested; while the unfortunates suffering from acute mania are confined in dark cellars, manacled, starved, and beaten, till death soon terminates their sufferings.

Vaccination is not in favour; inoculation, or the direct communication of the disorder by placing the patient in the same bed with one suffering from small-pox of the most virulent type, is the method pursued.

There are no medical schools, save the so-called college at Teheran; but, as a rule, some slight smattering of the methods of treatment I have noticed, if methods they can be called, is picked up by a son inheriting his father's practice, or a servant that of his master. Anatomy is quite unknown, and no such thing as a necropsy is ever permitted. The only works consulted are those of Hippocrates, Avicenna (called Abu Senna), and a few Arabic works of great antiquity. The social status of the hakim, or physician, is good; but the surgeon is generally of the same position as the barber. This latter enjoys the monopoly of dentistry, shampooing, phlebotomy, and the actual cautery; he also cups and performs the operation of circumcision, and often is a bone-setter, while he generally pretends to a special knowledge of diseases of the eye.

Some of the remedies of the native physicians recall the strange old mediæval and classical plans, such as the placing of a live pigeon or disembowelled fowl or lamb to the feet of a dying patient; or such a plan as burying the patient in a hotbed of fermenting manure, or the sewing him up in a sheepskin freshly flayed

from the body of the animal, are in high repute. It is easy to be seen that there is nothing to be learnt from the Persian system of medicine, save the great attention to dietetic rules which is invariably practised.





CHAPTER XIII.

DERVISHES.

Dress and appearance—Paraphernalia—Strange weapons—Cry of the dervish—New Year's custom of dervishes—"Hakk"—Penances—Character—Story of a dervish.

THE ordinary meaning of the word "dervish" is religious mendicant. In Persia dervishes are certainly mendicants; but their religion does not go much beyond pious ejaculations and the cursing of the infidel. True, the dervishes are under some mysterious vow, the only visible outcome of which is that they do no work; as a rule they will not even wash. Their hair and beards are always worn long, unkempt, and flowing in the wind. A striking appearance is affected, and obtained by startling costumes, by the strange weapons which only a dervish carries, or by the simple expedient of walking about stark-naked in a country where all but he are clothed. Every large town has a shop in which are exhibited the paraphernalia of the dervish: tall hats of cloth or felt, in shape and size resembling a sugar-loaf. On these hats are embroidered pious ejaculations or texts from the Koran. The calabash—generally an elaborately-carved vessel, made from a single Indian nut, that will hold several pints

—hangs from the dervish's girdle by brass chains: it is his wallet, drinking-vessel, and alms-box all combined. At these strange shops, too, may be seen carved beads in strings, each bead an inch or more in diameter. These necklets serve to add to the weird appearance of the dervish. Panther or leopard skins are also exhibited here for sale; these he carries partly for use, partly for ornament; the skin, hanging across his shoulder, is his effective mantle by day, his bed or coverlet by night. Take any ordinary Persian, let his hair grow; take off his outer garments, leaving him but his flowing shulwar and his shirt, or perhaps not even that: clap the tall embroidered sugar-loaf hat on his head, hang a necklet of big beads round his neck, sling a panther's skin across his shoulders, let his calabash depend from his girdle, let him be unwashed and uncombed; and you have your complete dervish, without his weapons. Dirt is not, however, essential to the dervish. There are clean dervishes, even men who dress in snowy white; but they are little better than amateurs. They are under a vow, but prefer to be clean for their own comfort. It is in his arms that the real dervish's fancy takes most scope. Bludgeons with portentous projections; clubs bristling with spikes or knife-blades; steel axes, single-headed or double-headed, at times beautifully damascened with silver or gold; maces of steel or iron, having the head like the head of a horned bull—the ancient shape of the capitals of many of the columns of old Persepolis. With one or other of these curious weapons the dervish is sure to be provided.

No one ever saw a dervish do a hand's-turn of work. He marches along at a slow and dignified pace, pretending to be lost in pious meditation. Suddenly he will rattle his calabash or extend it. "Hakk!" he will shriek, growl, or mutter, as he may feel disposed; "Ya Hakk!" ("O God!"—literally, "O the True" [God]). By this he means "Disgorge, believer, or infidel dog," as the case may be. Or he will politely present a flower, a nut, a leaf; and if it is accepted, a present must be given him.

The harvest of the dervish is at the New Year. At this festival, observed with rejoicing by all Persians, the dervish has a good time; every passer-by gives him a trifle for luck. At every rich or great man's door a dervish now encamps—literally encamps. He pitches a tiny tent, composed of a yard of canvas, which he pegs against the wall of the victim's doorway; he makes in front of the tent a sort of glorified mud pie, and calls it his garden; he decorates the pie with oranges or sprigs of shrubs. And he shouts "Hakk-Hakk-H-a-a-a-akk" day and night, perhaps for a month, till at last he is dismissed with a present. As there is a certain glory—is it not a visible sign of wealth and dignity?—in having a dervish at one's gate at New Year's time, the dervish generally remains at least a week. When he becomes impatient, real tortures commence. In addition to his eternal "Hakk," the dervish blows upon a buffalo-horn. No attempt is made at tune—far from it; and the awful sound is exactly like that produced by that fearful machine the "syren" fog-signal. Remember that the horn is blown suddenly, viciously, at dead of night, and at irregular

intervals, by an irritated dervish with sound lungs. The expected gratuity does not long remain ungiven when he takes to these nocturnal solos.

There are story-telling dervishes: proficient, some of them, having real genius, marvellous memories, and the arts of the ventriloquist and mimic at command. The dervish is permitted by custom to enter any assemblage, to seat himself at every board—a humble, uninvited, but still welcome guest. The Persians themselves consider that a dervish *per se* has no virtues, but that he is able by his “nuffus” (or holy inspiration) to perform miracles and foretell events. Many a successful religious impostor has commenced life as a dervish. There are communities of dervishes in Persia, but they are either unendowed or have been deprived of their emoluments. Close to the town of Shiraz are the Haftan, the habitation of the Seven (dervishes), and the Cheheltan, the habitation of the Forty (dervishes). Generally a few of these “vagrom men” may be found in these buildings; but they merely lodge—they do not dwell there. A dervish’s is a vow of wandering mendicancy; of his plunder, a large proportion—in fact, all not required for the dervish’s food—goes to his spiritual superior or “mürshed.” He gets what he does get by trading on the fears or charity of the credulous, by the sale of charms to women, by imposing on villagers, and by the sale of his sacred “nuffus” or breath to the sick or dying. The dervish is often a fortune-teller, at times a mesmerist or conjuror. If a gratuity be not given, he will curse the refuser openly. He is not a howling or a turning dervish, as are those at Constantinople

(the turning dervishes are what we English call the dancing dervishes). He does not, as a rule, mutilate himself or undergo penance of any kind, save at the season of the month of mourning, the Mohurrim, when, in honour of the saints and martyrs Hassan and Houssein, he will chop his forehead with a sword till streams of blood flow over the white shroud in which he dresses himself on this occasion. And in this same solemn month strings of dervishes may be seen who scourge their own bare backs with heavy iron chains until they bleed, while with their left hands they beat their naked and bruised chests, shouting at each stroke "Hassan ! Houssein !" in dismal chorus.

Dervishes have all the vices of the Persians. They drink, they eat and smoke both bhang and opium ; they are as a rule dangerous and insidious libertines, their victims in purse and person being the ignorant village women. Custom has made them tolerated. They are feared and endured, but neither loved nor respected. In fact, if a man in the East has utterly gone wrong, he burns his ships, buys a tall hat, a leopard-skin, and a big club, and, without ceremonial or initiation, he becomes to all intents and purposes a dervish—a vagrant and companion of vagrants.

The following little story, founded on fact, illustrates the wiles of the Persian Dervish.

THE PRINCE SHEIKH-UL-MALOOK, THE FAIRY SHAHR-I-BANOU, AND THE DERVISH NŪR-ED-DIN, THE CUP-COMPANION.

Within the last half-century the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook was Governor of Hamadan. His relationship to

Futteh-Ali, Shah of Persia, caused him to hold some of the highest appointments in the country. The Prince was an aged man of prepossessing appearance, and was, and had been, a most successful courtier and a general favourite. Though he was seventy years of age, and the possessor of the legal amount of married loveliness allowed to a Mussulman, viz. four lawful wives besides any number of fair "lights of the harem," still the old Prince, the most susceptible of men, sought on every hand fresh fields and pastures new.

A man of seventy in Persia does not seem old, when dressed in the costly and becoming flowing robes that the old-fashioned among the Iranian aristocracy still affect; with his turban of the richest Cashmerian shawl; his girdle of the same, into which were thrust his jewelled poignard and his elaborately-painted pencase; his sable-lined and trimmed coat of shawl, and his gold-embroidered vest of azure satin; all tending to set off the fair and aristocratic old face with its long jetty beard and bushy black eyebrows. Most of the high Persian aristocracy have features of a slightly Jewish cast, and the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook was no exception to this rule. I am afraid that the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook was a very frivolous old man. His principal occupation was to trim his nails, stroke his glossy black beard and think of his conquests among the sex past and to come. I say, his black beard, for, like his eyebrows, his beard was dyed a deep blue-black, with henna and indigo. This was not affectation: the custom is universal in Persia, and a venerable-looking old man is hardly ever seen. In fact, *not* to dye the hair is looked upon as a sign of mourning. From this it will be seen that

the handsome old Governor of Hamadan was an aristocratic voluptuary of a familiar type.

The governorship of Hamadan, the town and province, was no sinecure; but the Prince was rich and not avaricious; he left things pretty much to his vizier; and as long as the taxes were paid, the roads not too unsafe, and a plentiful supply of the famed wine of Hamadan sent in by the wretched Armenians, the old Shahzadeh let things go on without interfering. At nine o'clock every night, as soon as dinner was over, the Prince was accustomed to retire, not to his *anderūn* or harem, but to his apartments, and there enjoy himself in the forbidden pleasures of the bowl and the society of his cup-companion, the dervish *Nūr-ed-din*.* The dervish was most inappropriately called "The light of religion"—for such is the meaning of his name. There was very little of the saint about that "vagrom" man. Certainly, since he had been hanger-on at the provincial court of the Governor of Hamadan, he had discarded his mangy panther-skin, and his dilapidated sugar-loaf hat, adorned with sacred texts from the Koran, embroidered by the hands of his many admirers in gaily-coloured silks, had been renewed. He also was entirely denuded of his sacred dirt, to his intense disgust; and clad in white flowing garments by the Prince's order, he looked still picturesque and, almost, respectable. But no amount of washing could whiten the fiery nose of "The light of religion." There it shone in the midst of his cadaverous countenance like a danger-signal, and no wonder: for the light of his countenance was nightly fed with copious draughts of Hamadan wine, followed by

* *Nūr-ed-din* = The light of religion.

cup on cup of raw arrack ; and the dervish drank till fatigue overcame him—not till he was drunk : no, that delight, so much desired, was denied him : for he was so seasoned a vessel that drunkenness was to him only a far-away pleasure of memory.

The cup-companion was blessed with a prodigious memory. He could tell tale on tale of Eastern romance, and his talents as a *kissehgoo* or story-teller were inimitable. The dervish Nūr-ed-din was addressed in letters as “the heaven-inspired man, he who sits in the presence of princes ;” and the latter part of the phrase was exact enough, for most princes in Persia were only too glad to obtain the society of the “yarn-spinner.” When at a loss for money, the dervish had only to appear in the bazaar with his axe and beggar’s wallet, to give a shout and commence a story, to be surrounded by a gaping crowd of countrymen and idlers, who rewarded his exertions by showers of coppers, handfuls of dates, of gifts of fruit and sweet-meats. A natural ventriloquist and mimic, the characters in the dervish’s tales were true to life ; the voices of the young and aged were distinguishable, the snuffle of the Jew or the drawl of the Armenian were all imitated to a nicety. And then the poetry, the sonorous poetry, so effectively declaimed and so freely introduced ! Every Persian interlards his conversation with scraps and snatches from the national poets, more or less appositely introduced, and even the most illiterate peasant can appreciate the rhythm, rhyme and jungle of the Persian bards.

Although the position of dervish Nūr-ed-din as cup-companion of the Governor had its substantial rewards,

yet it wearied him. To tell his best stories to an audience of one man, even when that man was a Prince, seemed to the dervish as a casting of pearls before swine. The Prince, sober or even half-sober, was no doubt a good and appreciative listener. But the Prince in his cups was captious, and even dangerous. Besides, Nūr-ed-din was obliged to lead a regular and semi-respectable life. In fact, Nūr-ed-din longed to return to the wandering habits he had reluctantly quitted at the Prince's suggestion, which was of course equivalent to a command. Is it then to be wondered at that the dervish determined to give up all the sweets of court favour, and that for some time he had been revolving in his mind some stratagem or trick by which he might regain his liberty, and if possible line his purse? Most Persians prefer to obtain by deceit what might be got by simple honest work, and Nūr-ed-din was no exception to the rest of his fellow-countrymen. But, as the native proverb says, "if they were cats, he was the King of cats," and in all the wiles of charlatanry he was indeed a past-master. His plans were soon formed; nothing then remained but to carry them out.

As we have said, the Prince's weak point was his devotion to the sex; on this foible the dervish determined to depend, and one night as he joined his patron in the private apartments of the latter, Nūr-ed-din thus began:—

"May I be your sacrifice, Prince," said he, as he wiped his mouth after a deep draught of the iced wine of Hamadan, "I have something to confide. I have seen a vision."

“A vision!” yawned the Prince;” yes, go on with the story. Was it the Prophet, some saint, or the devil in person?”

“Neither, august master. And this is no story. It is a solemn fact, a serious matter, and it has much perplexed the mind of your slave. Besides, it is a secret, and a secret that I may only reveal under a vow of silence; and a terrible penalty would be the result of any indiscretion on my part, or on that of the person to whom I may confide it, for I am permitted to tell my trouble to one man only of all the human race”

“Let me be the chosen one, then, O Nūr-ed-din!” smiled the Prince, as he blew forth a huge cloud of smoke from either nostril, and replaced the jewelled mouthpiece of his *kalian* (or hubble-bubble) between his lips.

“Wallah, my Prince, it is no laughing matter. The jinns (*genii*) or the *deeves*, even our mutual friend, the devil himself, may he be accursed!—to whom just now you so playfully alluded; with all these I have had dealings, mostly in my dreams or in my cups, I allow; but—will you swear to keep my secret if I reveal it to you?”

“I swear—dear dervish of my soul—I swear by my beard—by my august relative and master; nay, if you will have it, by the head of Mortazza Ali himself, on whom be peace!”

The curiosity of the Prince was aroused; the dervish got up and carefully examined the doors and windows, and reseating himself, commenced in a solemn whisper the following recital:—“May it please your Highness—accepting the sacred oath your Highness has deigned

to bind himself by—I will unbosom myself. You will remember but yesterday that I left the cavalcade of your Highness when we were crossing the pass on the Assadabad hills, some six farsakhs from the abode of your Highness. I wandered about for some hours among the hills, and at length sat down by the side of a spring. I was wearied by my aimless walk, and soon dropped asleep under the shadow of a big boulder. I was awakened by the sound of a voice singing a love-song, the words and sound of which excited my imagination in the highest degree. The song ceased, I opened my eyes, and I beheld sitting on the boulder a being—ah, such a being! such eyes, such hair, such a complexion!”

“Spare your raptures, friend dervish, and spare me the hackneyed description.”

“May your Highness’s shadow never grow less, I am powerless to describe those celestial charms. No; all the houris of paradise could never equal the beauty of the angelic being, who reclined upon the boulder and smiled—yes, actually smiled, on the humblest of the human race. ‘Maiden,’ I said, ‘loveliest of your sex——’

“‘Look at me again,’ smiled the beauteous vision; ‘look again, dervish. You think me a wretched mortal like yourself—look again.’

“I had never taken my eyes off the speaker. I gazed on her more enthusiastically than before, and I saw—I saw something bright fluttering over each shoulder. They were wings, yes, wings of a beautiful blue colour and almost transparent—tiny wings that ceaselessly moved as do the wings of a butterfly when perched on

a flower. My lovely companion was a Peri, a fairy. 'Heavens!' I cried, 'Do not speak of Heaven,' she answered, 'we do not like it. No one likes to talk of the unattainable.'

"'Fairy,' I said, 'most delicious of beings, tell me at least your name?'

"'My name is Shahr-i-Banou,' tittered the delightful vision.

"'Never before had that rather common name seemed so softly-sounding to my ear.

"'Shahr-i-Banou,' I repeated, dwelling lovingly on the magic syllables: 'Ah! Shahr-i-Banou, what can a mortal do to gain your favour? May I ask, with all due respect, are you a married fairy?'

"'We don't marry in fairy-land, unsainted dervish. Ours is a universal love, a sort of moral sympathy. And when we choose, we are faithful evermore. I—I have never chosen,' she added, 'for I swore that I would never love, till I was assured of a lasting affection, and—well, say a dowry—a rich dowry, such as mortal maidens have.'

"'You were mercenary, fairy!'

"'No—it was but a silly idea. But I had sworn it, and in fairy-land we keep our oaths, we *must* keep them. Of course, I have never yet been offered a dowry. For' she said, as she smiled on me bewitchingly, 'I am considered plain, very plain for a fairy.'

"'May I be your sacrifice, charming Shahr-i-Banou, you joke; such loveliness as yours these eyes have never gazed on—and dervishes, as you know, are connoisseurs. No woman veils before a dervish, it's unlucky—besides,' added I, gaining courage, 'I am, as I said,

a judge, and you—you are at least not *very* plain.' This I said in order not to let her perceive the state of my affections, for I felt that, like the rest of her sex, the dowry would rule in direct proportion to the value she set on her attractions. 'What, oh! fairy, is the amount of the needful dowry?'

"Here she raised her hands, and glibly and with many smiles counted off on her fingers—her taper fingers—the following list:—

"Two skirts of the finest Cashmere shawl, one to be embroidered with seed-pearls.

"Two velvet jackets, one red, one green, (dark-green), gold-embroidered.

"One veil also embroidered, and in the latest Teheran fashion.

"The usual undergarments.

"A comb.

"A hand-mirror (of course of silver).

"Two pairs of shoes, one with high heels."

"'And a Koran,' I exclaimed, 'of course a Koran?'

"'Don't mention the word,' she said with a frown. 'We don't care for them in fairy-land, *we* have other rules: not perhaps so strict, but far simpler.'

"'And is that all?' I said, 'Is that all?'

"'Oh, the usual jewellery,' she carelessly replied; 'stones, of course; I don't care for heavy gold and silver things: they make one look like a loaded mule.'

"'Hum!'—I asked, rather from curiosity than interest, for I saw that the fairy's terms were beyond me; 'and the amount?—the value?'

"'Oh, I leave that to the taste and generosity of the giver!' she saucily replied.

"I stretched out my hand to touch her rather scanty drapery. I speedily regretted my temerity. Your Highness, may I be your sacrifice, will see the result." Here the dervish bared his wrist, and five small blisters were apparent. "The Fairy Shahr-i-Banou had given me a gentle slap, and the points of her taper fingers burnt like red-hot iron."

"'That is a cruel souvenir to give a disconsolate lover,' I remarked. 'Can you give me no more pleasant keepsake?'

"'I give you this juniper-berry,' smiled the Fairy, as she plucked one from a bush; 'keep it for my sake. Be secret; you may consult one friend, but one, or dread my vengeance! And remember, this day week, an hour after sunset, place my dowry on this boulder; come alone and unarmed: there is nothing I will deny you—you, or any mortal who will fulfil the conditions.'

"She placed her finger to her pouting lips: 'Remember!' she whispered once more, and vanished from my sight."

"Bah!" said the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook; "a poor story, oh! Nūr-ed-Din. Did you keep the juniper-berry as well as the burns, eh?"

"That is the most extraordinary part of it, your Highness: there it is." And as the dervish spoke, he handed a round uncut emerald to the Prince.

The old courtier took it. There was no deception. Clouds of smoke streamed from his nostrils, his brow became furrowed. He eyed the dervish severely after he had examined the stone.

"Unsainted dervish, why attempt to mystify me? What mean your burns, your juniper-berry, and your

emerald? Where stole you this stone? From what childless hag have you taken it as a fee? Speak—Or——” The Prince paused significantly.

The dervish burst into tears, and seemed to turn pale, all but his ruby nose, and that shone with undiminished splendour.

“Ah, Aga! ah, Prince! You have surprised my confidence. It all happened as I told you, indeed it did. By your head, by your salt, by your death, I swear it!”

“We shall see,” said the Governor, clapping his hands.

The farrashes entered. “Beat me this man,” roared the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook. And the man was beaten. His feet were fixed in the merciless fellek. Swish! crash! crack! smash! Down came the sticks on his bare soles, breaking and flying in every direction. The Prince made no sign, as he twirled the little emerald between his forefinger and thumb. “Lay on, dogs!” he shouted. He knew that a dervish’s feet are hard.

“*Amán!* (mercy) *Amán!*” cried the dervish. “Oh, Prince without compassion, *Amán!*” At length he raved, and then gradually became inarticulate. He had swooned. At a gesture from the Prince-governor, the farrashes left the room. The Prince, calling for a new pipe, blew forth clouds of fragrant smoke. But he was excited, and intrigued.

The dervish at length came to himself. “Oh! chief of liars——” said the Governor——“we are alone; tell me the truth.”

“Oh! Highness,” groaned the unfortunate man, “you have brought out from their graves seven generations

of my ancestors! What can I say? What do you want me to say? Oh my feet—my mangled feet!”

“The truth; no trifling, rascal, the truth!”

“It *was* the truth. May I be—beaten again, if it wasn’t,” whined the unhappy dervish.

“Go, man; you are dismissed,” replied the Prince.

The dervish, with many groans and sighs, crawled out. The Prince never returned the emerald—he continued to twiddle it as before. The wrinkles on his forehead became deeper.

“It *is* an emerald,” he said to himself.

He sent for the chief jeweller, an aged Jew. It *was* an emerald, and without flaw.

The Prince smoked on far into the night; as he smoked, he drank; as his potations became deeper, he saw things in a light more and more rosy.

“Ah, Shahr-i-Banou!” he muttered, as he sank to sleep on his huge silken pillows, “I will pay the dowry.”

The dervish placed his beaten feet in a sort of cataplasm of yolks of eggs, the invariable treatment for the feet of the bastinadoed in Persia. His red nose shone, he kept sober, but he vowed revenge. He never asked for the emerald; he made no sign. “The poison is working,” said the dervish to himself. “The Fairy Shahr-i-Banou will get her dowry yet,” he sneered; “and Nūr-ed-din—Nūr-ed-din will have vengeance!” Day by day the feet of the dervish improved, but he did not forget his beating—nay, he lashed himself into a passion over it. “Five hundred sticks, as I’m a sinner, and well laid on too. There was no pity in those farrashes, but what *unbribed* farrash ever has

pity? They never missed their aim. How the villains laid it on!"

For five days the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook had twiddled the fairy emerald between his finger and thumb; for five evenings he had sat in solitary state quaffing deep draughts of the heady wine of Hamadan; for five days he had left unvisited his *anderūn*, that abode of caged loveliness; for five days he had sent no reply to his four middle-aged wives, who pestered him with messages. Nay, his *koja-bashi*, a sexless Abyssinian black, of venerable but hideous appearance, had suggested his consulting a physician. But daily he became more and more in love with the fairy *Shahr-i-Banou*, whom he had never seen. On the sixth evening he sent for the dervish; and partly out of compliment and to show his good-will, partly because he fancied the dervish unable to walk, he ordered one of his own horses, gold-caparisoned, to be sent for the use of *Nūr-ed-din*. As the dervish entered the Prince-governor's presence, he presented a picture of touching humility. He was bent almost double; he supported himself on a long ashen wand; he tottered to his accustomed seat on the Prince's left-hand.

"Sit, prince of cup-companions, sit! All is forgotten and forgiven."

"No, not forgotten," grinned *Nūr-ed-din*; "not forgotten. I shall remember that never-to-be forgotten and portentous thrashing to the day of my death. I shall never be aught but a cripple. Oh, my feet!"

"Here is ointment," said the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook, "Golden ointment;" and he tossed a silken purse, filled with bright *tomans*, to the dervish. The

purse was worth two or three emeralds such as the one the dervish had parted with. The cup-companion's little eyes twinkled, and he was profuse in thanks. "Have I thrown away my sprat and caught my salmon?" he thought. "It seems so."

"Pour," said the Prince-governor, as he extended his drinking-bowl of curiously-carved silver towards the dervish. The dervish filled it, and then his own more modest brazen cup. They drank, they sang, they smoked; they were the boon companions of a week ago. They trolled merry ditties and choruses. Love-song after love-song was sung in his old, broken, but still pleasing voice by the Prince-governor; he even accompanied himself on the tarr, a sort of viol. *Amán Leily*, the plea of the disconsolate lover to his mistress, was given with much fervour by the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook. But never a word was spoken of the Fairy and her dowry. Had the Governor forgotten her? At length Sheikh-ul-Malook placed his hand in his secret breast-pocket, the one over his heart: from it he drew the round emerald. He twiddled it fondly between his finger and thumb. "Ah!" he cried, with a tremendous sigh, "Ah, Shahr-i-Banou!"

"Bring me those trays," said the Prince, pointing to two huge circular *plateaux* of silver, carefully covered with richly-embroidered silken sheets. "Bring me the trays."

With the aid of his ashen staff, the dervish slowly rose to his feet, and carefully deposited the trays before the Prince-governor. The Prince removed the coverings. There, carefully folded, lay all the various costly garments mentioned in the Fairy's demand. The

eyes of the dervish sparkled as he noticed the little mass of gems that crowned each heap: a ruby and diamond *jika* for the head, earrings of pearl and emerald, a necklace of large pinky pearls from Bahrein in the Gulf, several jewelled bangles and bracelets.

"Is the tale complete, oh Nūr-ed-din?"

They went through the clothes. "All is exact—nay, more, most generous of princes; you have been more liberal than Hatim Tai, till now looked on as the most generous of men. Ah! thanks to your kindness, I shall be happy in the society of the Fairy Shahr-i-Banou."

"Not so, dervish; be not presumptuous. *I* shall be the happiest of mortals."

"You! Oh, prince!—Yes, it is just; you are indeed the more fitting person," faltered the dervish, pretending to repress his disappointment.

"It would not be fitting, oh cup-companion, that one vowed to celibacy as you are, should be possessor of more than mortal beauty. Besides, you could not maintain her as she would expect. No, I am really doing you a favour. Is it not so? Speak, man!"

"Your Highness has spoken truly," stammered the dervish, never taking his eyes off the sparkling gems. "Yes, prince, it is fated that you are to become the happiest of mortals."

Several hours were spent by the Prince and his cup-companion in their accustomed libations, and at a most unholy hour the dervish left the palace, clothed in a dress of honour, having promised to conduct the future husband of the Fairy to the exact spot at the appointed time; while the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook dropped to sleep full of wine and the pleasures of hope, still

clutching in his hand the fairy juniper-berry, the emerald, the gift of the Fairy Shahr-i-Banou.

On the appointed day the Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook set forth at noon accompanied only by a few horsemen: one of them was the dervish Nūr-ed-din. On his horse were placed a pair of embroidered saddle-bags. They contained the Fairy's trousseau and the jewellery, the amount and nature of which had been so confidently "left to the taste and generosity of the giver." A covered empty horse-litter* accompanied the party. The hardy Persians made nothing of the twenty miles to the ruined caravanserai on the Pass of Assadabad. There the Prince partook of tea. He then, as a good Mussulman, said his evening prayer. He carefully combed his long and well-kept beard. He had passed the whole morning in the bath, sedulously renewing the dyes to his hair, beard, and eyebrows. His barber had never known him to be so particular in his various lustrations, since his marriage with a royal princess, the jealous and rather scraggy head of his seraglio. His finger-tips and feet were dyed with henna to a deep orange colour, and his clothes were of the latest fashion, and every stitch on him was new.

"It is time, dervish," said the Prince; "let the horses be brought." The Prince mounted, and bidding his attendants await his return, he and the dervish disappeared in a neighbouring gorge.

"My Prince, are you unarmed?" remarked the latter.

"All save this," replied the Prince, touching his jewelled poignard.

* The Takht rowan, or horse-litter, is what Persian ladies of condition travel in.

"Better be without it. Who knows what may happen if you disobey the Fairy's commands in the least. Fairies are ticklish people to offend," remarked the dervish, as he pointed to the blisters, not yet quite healed, upon his wrist.

"It is true. Keep it for me, oh, dervish, but beware how you mislay the gift of the King of Kings to his relative;" and he handed the dagger to the arch-impostor.

"Where is the place? Are we near it?" stammered the Prince-governor, in a voice weak with excitement, not untinged by fear.

"We are arrived: this is the very spot," said the dervish in a firm voice, as he dismounted, and hastened to assist the Prince to the ground. "There is the boulder, and there the spring as I described them to your Highness." He proceeded to tether the horses. The courage of the Prince-governor was fast disappearing. Here he was in a lonely mountain pass, unarmed, far from all help, perhaps in the power of a malicious fairy, or even in that of his cup-companion, the dervish. He eyed the latter with suspicion. He seemed to have grown larger. He no longer leant upon his ashen staff, but vigorously grasped it. His eyes sparkled, his nose was redder than ever, insolently red.

The dervish produced a big flat bottle from his capacious pockets. He solemnly took a deep draught of the spirit it contained, and then, turning to the Prince, shouted in a voice of thunder, "On your knees, oh, man!"

"Are you demented, oh, dervish?" faltered the Prince.

"No, dog of a Shahzadeh! I am about to settle accounts with you. I always pay my debts. I owe you a beating—a good beating. I will try to pay in full."

With these cruel words, the dervish Nūr-ed-din fell upon the unhappy Prince-governor. The ashen staff rained a shower of blows upon those august shoulders, and upon the princely but spindle shanks. "*Amán, Amán!*" cried the Prince. "Just what I said," remarked the dervish, continuing his castigation. At length the fury of the dervish was appeased. The unhappy Prince sat upon the ground, weeping with mingled pain and rage.

"I want your clothes," remarked the dervish in a tone of command, "your purse and your seals." These were reluctantly handed over. "Remark, oh, my cup-companion," jeered the dervish, "I have mercy: I leave your under-garments." As the Prince stood shivering in the twilight, he didn't seem much to appreciate the mercy of his betrayer. "Farewell," said the dervish, "I think I have got everything," he carelessly remarked. "Ah! the Fairy's gift, the juniper-berry." The Prince Sheikh-ul-Malook gave it him with a muttered curse.

"Farewell once more. Remember me to the fair Shahr-i-Banou, *when you see her*," he cried; and galloped off, leading the Prince's horse by the head-ropes of blue silk.

The dervish was never seen again: he passed the Persian frontier into Turkey in forty-eight hours by hard riding.

The Prince found his followers about midnight. He kept his bed for a month, and never told the story of

his adventure. The horse-litter returned empty as it went to Hamadan.

There is an old Persian jeweller in Stambûl : he has a very red nose, and a twinkling eye. Some fine gems may be bought of him occasionally ; but he never will part with a small round emerald without flaw, which he calls, absurdly enough, his Luck, his juniper-berry.

There is a little spring, flowing still from under a big boulder near Assadabad, some twenty-four miles from Hamadan. It is called the Spring of the Fairy Shahr-i-Banou.





CHAPTER XIV.

PERSIAN ART AND ARTISTS.

Pupilage—Subjects—Bastinado—Commissions—Prices—Pen-cases
—Enamelling—Improving on Nature—The Schamayül—Artist
at home—Fire-reviver.

THE limner's art in Persia has few patrons, and the professional draughtsman of the present day in that country must needs be an enthusiast, and an art-lover for art's sake, as his remuneration is so small as to be a mere pittance; and the man who can live by his brush must be clever indeed. The Persians are an eminently practical people, and buy nothing unless it be of actual utility; hence the artist has generally to sink to the mere decorator; and as all, even the very rich, expect a great deal for a little money, the work must be scamped in order to produce a great effect for a paltry reward. The artists, moreover, are all self-taught, or nearly so, pupilage merely consisting of the drudgery of preparing the canvas, panel, or other material for the master, mixing the colours, filling in backgrounds, varnishing, &c. There are no schools of art, no lectures, no museums of old or contemporary masters, no canons of taste, no drawing from nature or

the model, no graduated studies, or system of any kind. There is, however, a certain custom of adhering to tradition and the conventional; and most of the art-workmen of Iran, save the select few, are mere reproducers of the ideas of their predecessors.

The system of perspective is erroneous; but neither example nor argument can alter the views of a Persian artist on this subject. Leaving aside the wonderful blending of colours in native carpets, tapestries, and embroideries, all of which improve by the toning influence of age, the modern Persian colourist is remarkable for his skill in the constant use of numerous gaudy and incongruous colours, yet making one harmonious and effective whole, which surprises us by its daring, but compels our reluctant admiration.

Persian pictorial art is original, and it is cheap; the wages of a clever artist are about one shilling and sixpence a day. In fact, he is a mere day-labourer, and his terms are, so many days' pay for a certain picture. In this pernicious system of time-work lies the cause of the scamping of many really ingenious pieces of work.

As a copyist the Persian is unrivalled; he has a more than Chinese accuracy of reproduction; every copy is a fac-simile of its original, the detail being scamped, or the reverse, according to the scale of payment. In unoriginal work, such as the multiplication of some popular design, a man will pass a lifetime, because he finds it pay better to do this than to originate. This kind of unoriginal decoration is most frequent in the painted mirror-cases and book-covers, the designs of which are ancient; and the painter merely

reproduces the successful and popular work of some old and forgotten master.

But where the Persian artist shines is in his readiness to undertake any style or subject; geometrical patterns—and they are very clever in originating these; scroll-work scenes from the poets; likenesses, miniatures, paintings of flowers or birds; in any media, on any substance, oils, water, or enamel, and painting on porcelain; all are produced with rapidity, wonderful spirit, and striking originality. In landscape, the Persian is very weak; and his attempts at presenting the nude, of which he is particularly fond, are mostly beneath contempt. A street scene will be painted in oils and varnished to order, in a week, on a canvas a yard square, the details of the painting desired being furnished in conversation. While the patron is speaking, the artist rapidly makes an outline sketch in white paint; and any suggested alterations are made in a few seconds by the facile hand of the *ustad nakosh* (master-painter), a term used to distinguish the artist from the mere portrait-painter or *akkas*, a branch of the profession much despised by the artists, a body of men who consider their art a mechanical one, and their guild no more distinguished than those of other handicraftsmen.

A Persian artist will always prefer to reproduce rather than to originate, because, as a copy will sell for the same price as an original, by multiplication more money can be earned in a certain time than by the exercise of originality. Rarely, among the better class of artists, is anything actually out of drawing; the perspective is of course faulty, and resembles that

of early specimens of Byzantine art. Such monstrosities as the making the principal personages giants, and the subsidiaries dwarfs, are common: while the beauties are represented as much bejewelled; but this is done to please the buyer's taste, and the artist knows its absurdity. There is often considerable weakness as to the rendering of the extremities; but as the Persian artist never draws, save in portraiture, from the life, this is not to be wondered at.

The author has before him a fair instance of the native artist's rendering of the scene at the administration of the bastinado. This picture is an original painting in oils, twenty-four inches by sixteen, on *papier mâché*. The details were given to the artist by the writer in conversation, sketched by him in white paint on the *papier mâché* during the giving of the order, in the course of half an hour; and the finished picture was completed, varnished, and delivered in a week. The price paid for this original work in oils in 1880 was seven shillings and sixpence. The costumes are quite accurate in the minutest detail; the many and staring colours employed are such as are in actual use; while the general *mise en scène* is very correct.

Many similar oil-paintings were executed for the writer by Persian artists, giving graphic renderings of the manners and customs of this little-known country. They were always equally spirited, and minutely correct as to costume and detail, at the same low price; a small present for an extraordinarily successful performance gladdening the heart of the artist beyond his expectations.

As to original work by Persian artists in water-

colour, remuneration is the same—so much per diem. A series of water-colours giving minute details of Persian life were wished; and a clever artist was found as anxious to proceed as the writer was eager to obtain the sketches. The commission was given, and the subjects desired carefully indicated to the artist, who, by a rapid outline sketch in pencil, showed his intelligence and grasp of the subject. The author, delighted at the thought of securing a correct and permanent record of the manners and customs of a little-known people, congratulated himself. But, alas! he counted his chickens before hatching; for the artist, on coming with his next water-colour, demanded, and received, a double wage. A similar result followed the finishing of each drawing; and though the first only cost three shillings, and the second six, the writer was reluctantly compelled to stop his commissions, after paying four times the price of the first for his third water-colour, on the artist demanding twenty-four shillings for the fourth—not that the work was more, but as he found himself appreciated, the wily painter kept to arithmetical progression as his scale of charge; a very simple principle, which all artists must devoutly wish they could insist on.

For a reduced copy of a rather celebrated painting, of which the figures were life-size, of what might be called, comparatively speaking, a Persian old master—for this reduction, in oils, fourteen inches by eight, and fairly well done, the charge was a sovereign. The piece was painted on a panel. The subject is a royal banqueting scene in Ispahan—the date a century and a-half ago. The dresses are those of the time—the

ancient court costume of Persia. The king in a brocaded robe is represented seated on a carpet at the head of a room, his drinking-cup in his hand; while his courtiers are squatted in two rows at the sides of the room, and are also carousing. Minstrels and singers occupy the foreground of the picture; and a row of handsome dancing-girls form the central group. All the figures are portraits of historical personages; and in the copy the likenesses are faithfully retained.

The palaces of Ispahan are decorated with large oil-paintings by the most eminent Persian artists of their day. All are life-size, and none are devoid of merit. Some are very clever, particularly the likenesses of Futteh-Ali Shah and his sons, several of whom were strikingly like their father. As Futteh-Ali Shah had an acknowledged family of seventy-two, this latter fact is curious. These paintings are without frames, spaces having been made in the walls to receive them. The Virgin Mary is frequently represented in these mural paintings; also a Mr. Strachey, a young diplomat who accompanied the English mission to Persia in the reign of our Queen Elizabeth, is still admired as a type of adolescent beauty. He is represented with auburn hair, in the correct costume of the period; and copies of his portrait are still often painted on the pen-cases of amateurs. These pen-cases, or *kalamdāns*, are the principal occupation of the miniature-painter. As one-fourth of the male population of Persia can write, and as each man has one or more pen-cases, the artist finds a constant market for his wares in their adornment. The pen-case is a box of *papier-mâché*, eight inches long, an inch and a-half broad, and the

same deep. Some of them, painted by artists of renown, are of great value, forty pounds being a common price paid for such a work of art by a rich amateur. Several fine specimens may be seen in the Persian Collection at the South Kensington Museum. It is possible to spend a year's hard work on the miniatures painted on a pen-case. These are very minute and beautiful. The writer possesses a pen-case painted during the lifetime of Futteh-Ali Shah, a king of Persia who reigned long and well. All the faces—none more than a quarter of an inch in diameter—are likenesses; and the long black beard of the king, reaching to his waist, is not exaggerated, for such beards are common in Persia.

Bookbinding in Persia is an art, and not a trade; and here the flower and bird painter finds his employment. Bright bindings of boards with a leather back are decorated by the artist, principally with presentations of birds and flowers, both being a strange mixture of nature and imagination; for if a Persian artist in this branch thinks that he can improve on nature in the matter of colour, he attempts it. The most startling productions are the result: his nightingales being birds of glorious plumage, and the colours of some of his flowers saying much for his imagination. This method of "painting the lily" is common in Persia; for the narcissus—bouquets of which form the constant ornament in spring of even the poorest homes—is usually "improved" by rings of coloured paper, silk, or velvet being introduced over the inner ring of petals. Startling floral novelties are the result; and the European seeing them for the first time

is invariably deceived, and cheated into admiration of what turns out afterwards to be a transparent trick. Of course, this system of binding each book in an original cover of its own, among a nation so literary as the Persians, gives a continuous and healthy impetus to the art of the flower-painter.

Enamelling in Persia is a dying art. The best enamels are done on gold, and often surrounded by a ring or frame of transparent enamel, grass-green in colour. This green enamel, or rather transparent paste, is supposed to be peculiar to the Persian artist. At times, the gold is hammered into depressions, which are filled with designs in enamel on a white paste, the spaces between the depressions being burnished gold. Large *plaques* are frequently enamelled on gold for the rich; and often the golden water-pipes are decorated with enamels, either alone, or in combination with encrusted gems.

Yet another field remains to the Persian artist—that of engraving on gold, silver, brass, copper, and iron. Here the work is usually artistically good, and always original, no two pieces being alike.

Something must be said about the artist and his studio. Abject poverty is the almost universal lot of the Persian artist. He is, however, an educated man, and generally well read. His marvellous memory helps him to retain the traditional attributes of certain well-known figures: the black-bearded Rūstum (the Persian Hercules), and his opponent the Deev Suffid or White Demon; Leila and Mujnūn, the latter of whom retired to the wilderness for love of the beautiful Leila; and in a painfully attenuated state, all his ribs

being very apparent, is always represented as conversing with the wild beasts, who sit around him in various attitudes of respectful attention. Dr. Tanner could never hope to reach the stage of interesting emaciation to which the Persian artists represent Mujnūn to have attained. Another popular subject is that of Solomon in all his glory.

These legends are portrayed with varying art but unquestionable spirit, and often much humour; while the poetical legends of the mythical history of ancient Persia, full of strange imagery, find apt illustrators in the Persian artist. The palmy days of book-illustration have departed; the cheap reprints of Bombay have taken away the *raison d'être* of the calligraphist and book-illustrators, and the few really great artists who remain are employed by the present Shah in illustrating his great copy of the 'Arabian Nights' by miniatures which emulate the beauty and detail of the best specimens of ancient monkish art, or in making bad copies of European lithographs to "adorn" the walls of the royal palaces.

As for the painter's studio, it is usually a bare but light apartment, open to the winds, in a corner of which, on a scrap of matting, the artist kneels, sitting on his heels. (It tires an Oriental to sit in a chair.) A tiny table a foot high holds all his materials; his paints are mixed on a tile; and his palette is usually a bit of broken crockery. His brushes he makes himself. Water-pipe in mouth—a luxury that even an artist can afford, in a country where tobacco is fourpence a pound—his work held on his knee in his left hand, without a mahl-stick or the assistance of a colour-

man, the artist squats contentedly at his work. He is ambitious, proud of his powers, and loves his art for art's sake. Generally, he does two classes of work—the one the traditional copies of the popular scenes before described, or the painting on pen-cases—by this he lives; the other purely ideal, in which he deals with art from a higher point of view, and practises the particular branch which he affects.

As a painter of likenesses, the Persian seldom succeeds in flattering. The likeness is assuredly obtained; but the sitter is usually “guyed,” and a caricature is generally the result. This is not the case in the portraits of females, and in the ideal heads of women and children. The large dreamy eye and long lashes, the full red lips, and naturally high colour, the jetty or dark auburn locks (a colour caused by the use of henna, a dye) of the Persian women in their natural luxuriance, lend themselves to the successful production of the peculiarly felicitous representation of female beauty in which the Persian artist delights. Accuracy in costume is highly prized, and the minutiae of dress are indicated with much aptness, the varied pattern of a shawl or scarf being rendered with almost Chinese detail. Beauty of the brunette type is the special choice of the artist and amateur, and “salt”—as a high-coloured complexion is termed—is much admired.

Like the ancient Byzantine artist, the Persian makes a free use of gold and silver in his work. When wishing to represent the precious metals, he first gilds or silvers the desired portion of the canvas or panel, and then with a fine brush puts in shadows, &c. In this way a strangely magnificent effect is produced. The

presentments of mailed warriors are done in this way; and the jewelled chairs, thrones, and goblets in which the Oriental mind delights. Gilt backgrounds, too, are not uncommon, and their effect is far from displeasing.

The painting of portraits of Mohammed, Ali, Houssein, and Hassan—the last three, relatives of the Prophet, and the principal martyred saints in the Persian calendar, is almost a trade in itself, though the representation of the human form is contrary to the Mahommedan religion, and the saints are generally represented as veiled and faceless figures. Yet in these particular cases, custom has over-ridden religious law, and the Schamayŭl (or portrait of Ali) is common. He is represented as a portly personage of swarthy hue; his dark and scanty beard, which is typical of the family of Mahommed, crisply curled; his hand is grasping his sword; and he is usually depicted as wearing a green robe and turban (the holy colour of the Sayyids or descendants of the Prophet). A nimbus surrounds his head; and he is seated on an antelope's skin, for the Persians say that skins were used in Arabia before the luxury of carpets was known there.

Humble as is the lot of the Persian artist, he expects to be treated by the educated with consideration, and would be terribly hurt at any want of civility. One well-known man, Agha Abdullah of Shiraz, generally insisted on regaling the writer with coffee, which he prepared himself when his studio was visited. To have declined this would have been to give mortal offence. On one of these visits, his little brasier of charcoal was nearly extinguished, and the host had

recourse to a curious kind of fire-igniter, reviver, or rather steam-blast, that as yet is probably undescribed in books. It was of hammered copper, and had a date on it that made it three hundred years old. It was fairly well modelled; and this curious domestic implement was in the similitude of a small duck preening its breast; consequently, the open beak, having a spout similar to that of a tea-kettle, was directed downwards. The Persian poured an ounce or so of water into the copper bird, and placed it on the expiring embers. Certainly the result was surprising. In a few minutes the small quantity of water boiled fiercely; a jet of steam was emitted from the open bill, and very shortly the charcoal was burning brightly. The water having all boiled away, the Persian triumphantly removed this scientific bellows with his tongs, and prepared coffee.

No mention has been made of the curious bazaar pictures, sold for a few pence. These cost little, but are very clever, and give free scope for originality, which is the great characteristic of the Persian artist. They consist of studies of town-life, ideal pictures of dancing-girls, and such-like. All are bold, ingenious, and original. But bazaar pictures would take a chapter to themselves.





CHAPTER XV.

IN A BARBER'S SHOP IN PERSIA.

Meshedi Hassan—Easy shaving—Dentistry—Persian exaggeration—Dyeing the beard—The barber's shop—Implements—Decorating flowers—Chintz caps—Anecdote—Shaving the head—The barber-surgeon.

CURIOSITY impelled me to make an excuse to visit the shop of my barber and acquaintance, Meshedi Hassan (Meshedi is the title conferred by custom on all those who have made the pilgrimage to Meshed the holy, a town in the north of Persia, the burial-place of the Mahommedan Saint, Imām Reza). For the sum of two shillings and threepence a month, Meshedi Hassan was content to shave me at my own house; for a further gratuity of four shillings, Meshedi Hassan was glad to accompany me to the bath to wash me, shave me, and shampoo me, as only he could shampoo, to wash my hair with the clay of Shiraz, so celebrated throughout the East, and afterwards to trim it, much in the severe style in use among our regimental and ships' barbers. While performing the various offices indicated, Meshedi Hassan would regale me, Figaro-like, with all the scandal of the town, and on my inquiring where he heard the wonderful anecdote that had just passed his lips, he would invariably reply, "In my shop, sahib,

in my shop. Why not do me the honour to smoke a kalia,* just one kalia, there in my shop?"

"It would do you harm, Meshedi, were the public of the bazaar to be aware that you shaved an unbeliever."

"Not a bit of it, sahib. I would shave the Shaitan† himself, if he were only open-handed; and I should be respected by my clients for it, particularly if"—with a chuckle—"I kept tight hold of his nose."

As Hassan the barber had tight hold of my nose at the time, it accounted for his chuckle; as he was just going over the region above Adam's apple with his keen razor, there was no opportunity to reply to his joke.

"Besides," said the barber, with pride, "you would see me draw teeth, such teeth! You, doctor, who only draw the teeth of princes and gentry, you have never seen such teeth even in a dream," here he rubbed his finger dipped in water over my chin (they do not lather in the East); "such teeth—teeth with five roots."

"That's too many, Meshedi," I said; "not five roots, surely?"

"No, perhaps *not frequently*, but I have seen five in the tooth of a villager; nay—" meditatively, and tapping his forehead—"even six."

I could not remonstrate, for he had me quickly by the nose again, and continued his shaving of dangerous places with the native razor stuck in a straight wooden handle that is used by Persian barbers. I remembered that "all men are liars—" certainly all Persians are awful liars; but then, as one takes off a mental discount, it does not much matter.

* The Persian water-pipe or hubble-bubble.

† Devil.

"Of course, you understand, sahib, that I allude to villagers. I don't mean to say that we Shirazis have six, or even five, roots to our teeth, but the villagers have—they have indeed;" this was said with an air of candour which should have been convincing: it was told as one professional man would communicate some curious but indisputable fact to another. I merely discounted it in the usual manner, taking him to mean that the teeth of villagers were tightly set in their jaws.

"Then," said Hassan the barber, "you would see me cup, and bleed, and reduce dislocations and fractures. Ah! at my shop, and at my shop alone, is to be found the skill of the ancient surgeons of Iran (Persia). I call you yourself to witness, Doctor sahib. You, the English hakim, to whom Aflatoon * and Abou Senna † are as dogs, and to whom Pocrat, ‡ were he now alive, would be glad to be an apprentice, I call you to witness, did I not successfully cure your 'ricked' neck? Ah ha! when 'ricked' again, which heaven forbid, will you not send at once for Meshedi Hassan?" (ironically)

"Salaam, sahib, your most obedient slave! Is it not so?"

"It's quite true, Hassan, quite true, you do cure a 'ricked' neck marvellously."

"It is my nuffus (breath); we possess it, our family do; my father did in a wonderful degree—and, praise to Allah!"—here he rolled his eyes to heaven—"I possess it, if possible, to a more marked extent."

"You may expect me. I will come to your shop at once, Meshedi Hassan."

"You will? You really will come? You mean it?"

* Plato.

† Avicenna.

‡ Hippocrates.

I nodded.

"Then, come the day after to-morrow, that will be a fortunate hour, a most propitious time. Will you come, say at two hours after sunrise? I shall then be in full swing?"

"With pleasure. I won't forget"

"May your shadow never be less, sahib; I shall expect you. It is a great honour!"

Here Hassan the barber bowed himself out of my courtyard; for I had been shaved in the shade in the open air. Gathering his rattletraps up, and clapping his tattered abba (camel-hair cloak) under his arm, the barber retired with dignity.

"You won't go, sir, of course?" remarked my astute servant, Malek Mahommed, as he handed me a towel.

"Won't go! Of course I shall go; why not, pray? I want to see the humours of a barber's shop. Go! Certainly I shall go."

"Ah," said my man, "you sahibs, you are always taken in. Don't you see why, sahib, why he wants you to come the day after to-morrow? The son of a burnt father—it is plain enough."

"No; why? To let people see I patronize him?"

"Not a bit of it, sahib; he will say that you have come to learn from him!"

The absurdity of the situation tickled me. It was original of the man, very original! In vain my man argued; I was determined from curiosity to visit the barber's shop at the appointed hour. It was close by my house in my own quarter, almost in my own street. I was very well known in Shiraz: too well known to meet with any annoyance; and if in gratifying my

curiosity I enabled the astute barber to benefit himself, what did it matter to me?

At two hours after sunrise, the appointed time on the Thursday, the day preceding the Jūma (the Mahommedan sabbath) and consequently the busiest day in the bazaar, I repaired to the little shop of Meshedi Hassan; it was swept and garnished; clean as a new pin was the shop of the Barber of Shiraz. A little square room, one side open to the street, its white walls and brick floor had an air of cleanliness that was refreshing after the dusty street. In the centre was a tiny bed of common flowers sunk in the floor some two feet square; from the middle of this rose an octagonal stone column some yard high, the capital of which formed a receptacle for the water in which the barber dipped his hand ever and anon, as he shaved his customers, the little tradesmen and smaller people of the quarter; and shaving in Persia is a serious matter. To get shaved does not merely mean to get rid of superfluous beard: it signifies among the Persians to shave the entire scalp in most cases. Among the young, often a kharkūl or tuft is left in the centre of the top of the scalp; this little patch of hair has probably never known the razor, and is often a foot or even two in length; it is carefully tied in a knot, and hidden from view by the wearer's skull-cap of white embroidered linen. Mahommedans think that it has a use, for after death the Prophet by it will draw up the true believer into paradise. As a rule, too, among the younger men, the whole temporal bone is left covered with hair, and this hair is allowed to grow long, and forms the zūlf, or love-lock, which the boys and beaux

of Persia allow to hang down behind each ear. But the rest of the scalp is shaven certainly once a week, and it is a wise course to take in a hot country, if not for appearance at least for comfort—for in Persia a man is never seen bareheaded save in the shop of a barber. The middle-aged, on the contrary, generally shave the entire scalp, and allow the beard to grow long. Beards in Persia are generally worn long, and often attain a portentous growth. The late King Futteh Ali Shah set this fashion, and his magnificent black beard, the cynosure of his subjects' eyes, reached below his girdle. The beard, too, is respected in Persia. To pluck a man by the beard is the greatest insult that can be offered. It is dyed black or red, by means of henna or indigo, or both. This process, though usually gone through in the hammām (bath), was exemplified by a burly villager who sat basking in the sun at the outside of Hassan's shop on the earthen platform where the baser sort of his clients were accommodated. The man presented a sufficiently ludicrous appearance: his big beard was full of, apparently, yellow mud (the henna in a paste), and bound up with bits of cabbage-leaf to prevent too rapid evaporation; a similar application had been made to the sides of his head. To his fellow-countrymen there was nothing comical in this, but I found it rather difficult to keep my countenance, as the fellow eyed me with an air of sleepy curiosity. But he soon closed his eyes, and dozed, to pass the time till his poultice-like application could be removed, and he should blossom out in all the brightness of *orange-coloured* beard and hair.

Hassan received me with exuberant welcome.

“Your footsteps are on my eyes—you are indeed welcome; you honour my poor establishment.”

A chair had been brought from my house close by, and I was installed in a corner of the shop; a water-pipe, also my own, was placed in my hand by my servant, having been carefully filled with fine tobacco by Meshedi Hassan himself; and surrendering myself to its drowsy pleasures, I prepared to observe the barber and his customers, and to note my surroundings. As to the shop itself, I have said all was scrupulously clean and bright: on the two takjahs, or recesses, were displayed all the various curious *armamenta* of an Eastern barber's art. There were the scissors, the razors, the fleams and lancets, the hand-mirrors, square and circular, the *one* pair of huge pincers with which all teeth were extracted, the small clamp and knife used for certain operations on the youthful male Persians; the branding-irons used for the actual cautery—a favourite remedy in Persia—a few well-made native combs of ebony—absolutely no brushes, these being unused by Persians. These were the entire stock-in-trade of my friend the barber, save and except the various implements he carried on his person. I must not forget the four glasses filled with flowers. In the meanest shop are flowers; the Persian, practical and simple as he is, has a strong poetical side, and flowers are seen everywhere. Two of the vases contained bunches of the *Narcissus poeticus* (which in Persia grows wild); these gave a strong and delicious perfume; each single flower was decked (on the principle of painting the lily) with a tiny ring of various-coloured paper, which was slipped on between the two rings of petals,

thus giving the little bouquet the appearance to the uninitiated of a curious collection of new and undescribed varieties. There was nothing else in the shop save a small but handsome carpet on the floor reserved for the occupation of Hassan's more opulent customers. I would have sat on this carpet myself, but, though I had been many years in the East, yet my stubborn knees would not bend sufficiently to make the habit of dispensing with chairs usual in Persia anything but a source of acute discomfort to me. So I brought my chair, not from pride but from necessity.

Hassan himself, Agha Hassan (Mr. Hassan) as his meaner customers called him, Meshedi Hassan to me and all the world, was a good-looking fellow; his well-kept beard, undyed, glittered in brown luxuriance, his clear and healthy fair complexion shone with good-humour; dressed in his long garment of bright pink calico, his sleeves rolled up as is the custom in his trade (art he called it—and he was right), his clean and voluminous shulwar (in American, "pants"), and a pair of ghevas* of white cotton completed his costume. From his girdle, a yard or two of white calico, hung the round copper water-bottle, the needful utensil of the peripatetic barber in a country where water is scarce; also his strap on which he sharpens his razors;

* The gheva is a peculiar shoe made chiefly at Ispahan. What we call the upper is made of knitted cotton, the sole is formed of rags skewered together by thongs, and tipped at toe and heel with bits of hard sinew or horn; it forms a cool and strong foot-covering. It is used throughout Persia by the lower classes in summer; and in mountain expeditions, from its firm foothold, it is peculiarly useful. It is washed and pipeclayed, and lasts a long time. Cost, 2s. to 10s. a pair.

and a small leathern pouch, which holds a handy stock of the implements of his trade. In his bosom is a small mirror, the presentation of which to his customer is the sign that his functions are completed, and that he waits for his reward. On his head is the tall shub-kola (or night-cap) of quilted chintz which is often worn by the natives of Persia in the house, and by Ispahanis (inhabitants of Ispahan) and Jews habitually. A curious story hangs to this peculiar cap. In the north of Persia, and at the capital, it is never seen, save on the heads of the Jews, "Moollah" as they are called in derision, and when addressing them (Moollah really meaning priest). When the Shah visited Ispahan, all the people went out to meet him; as all the lower classes wore these chintz caps, his Majesty supposed that enormous deputations of Jews had come out to welcome him. More chintz caps, and, to the regal mind, more Jews! The royal visage perceptibly lengthened; at last, with a groan, he turned to the Prime Minister who rode at his side: "Have we *no* Mussulman subjects in Ispahan, then—are they all Moollahs (Jews)?" The Minister explained. An edict was issued: *no more chintz caps!* Not one was to be seen: the careful Ispahanis put them away. But, on the King's departure, the cool, cheap, washable chintz cap reappeared. A bright little fellow of some fourteen years, the counterpart of his father as to costume save that he wore the embroidered skull-cap we have mentioned, and his robe was of quilted coloured chintz, bustled about. He shaved the heads of villagers who were unworthy of his father's skill; he looked after the two lank apprentices and kept them hard at work; he

filled the eternal kalian, or water-pipe, for the various customers of consideration. And, on a lean and aged merchant of wealth arriving, he proceeded to cleverly shampoo his paralyzed arm, singing the while of the loves of Yusuf and Zuleikha, and of those of the Nightingale and the Rose, in a high but pleasing falsetto voice. Another merchant, in a dress of bright green cloth, sat, too, on the carpet and submitted his bristly head to the skilful hands of Meshedi Hassan, who soon rendered it smooth as a billiard-ball. Conversation, led by the barber, became general. The merchants, the head-shaving and shampooing over, continued to smoke their pipes and chat. Why should they hurry away in a country where time is of no object, particularly on a Thursday, which is almost a holiday for business men? Politics, the gossip of an Eastern town; who had taken a wife in the quarter, who was likely to put one away; the impending failure of this man, the departure on a pilgrimage of another; the price of grain and opium; interspersed with quotations from the poets, and appeals to the supposed general superior knowledge of the Feringhi (literally Frank), always couched in polite terms, and received with apparent respect. Village heads were shaved at the street side; arms, male and female, were bled into the gutter; and Meshedi Hassan actually extracted a part of a tooth—in three acts and a prologue, with an interval between each of five minutes. At the end a large piece came away, and the triumphant barber, examining it, remarked, “Ah, that was where the pain was!” The villager paid his penny, satisfied apparently, but going away, his cheek in his hand, a sadder

and perhaps wiser man. And now a sufferer from rheumatism appears. Meshedi Hassan heats a small iron in his earthen fire-pot, the patient lies down, and the barber, previously invoking the names of Mahommed, the Apostle of God, and the blessed saints, Hüssain and Hassan, calmly inflicts three severe burns on the man's loins. The sufferer pays his pence and goes his way. I, too, left the shop, receiving a polite farewell from the two merchants who remained to smoke. Meshedi Hassan accompanied me to my house-door, and placing a bunch of narcissus in my hand, bade me *au revoir*, thanking me for what he was pleased to call my kindness. Hardly had I arrived in my own courtyard, when I saw my servant, Malek Mahommed, enter breathless and pale with rage.

“Sahib, oh, sahib! I said it! I knew it! That dog, that misbegotten wretch, may the graves of seven generations of his ancestors be defiled! He has done it, I knew he would! There he stands, the rascal, explaining to the two merchants, *your patients*, that you—ah, that I should live to see the day!—that *you* have come to him at your own request to take a lesson in tooth-drawing!” I smiled, merely remarking that in every way the barber was a very clever fellow.



CHAPTER XVI.

SANCTUARY AND THE AVENGER OF BLOOD.

The Square of the Gun—Bast—Blood-feuds—Sanctuaries—Their inviolability.

IN the centre of the town of Teheran—the seat of government of Nussir-u-Deen, the King of Kings, the Asylum of the Universe—is a large square; it is called the Square of the Gun. The huge piece of ordnance that gives its name to the place is very like one of the cannon which stand behind the Horse Guards. Clustered round it are a group of weary-looking men. They are murderers; safe for the time being from the law, safe (generally) even from the avenger of blood: the place is bast, or sanctuary. Under the shadow or within touch of this gun the murderer, even the traitor, is safe. Let him once leave this refuge, if only for a few yards, and the criminal will fall into the hands of the law or the clutch of the avenger of blood. For in Persia the murderer has not so much to fear the laws of his country as the vengeance, legal or otherwise, of his victim's relatives. Blood has a price; and that price must be paid, or the criminal must be prepared to

shed his own. The price is not arbitrary : it is fixed, at so much for a freed man, another price for a woman, another for a slave. Nominally, and according to the religious law, even the hairs of a man's beard have a price (in camels) if extracted by violence. And within the last twenty years we have known a case of a Mussulman who sent in a regular account in this form to a European :—

To fifteen hairs from the beard of Rejeb.

Its equivalent being fifteen camels at seventy kerans :

= 1,050 kerans (£42). Please pay bearer.

(Seal of High Priest.)

This document was quite in legal form ; but, as the aggrieved Rejeb was unable to produce any hairs, a trifling present satisfied him. So much for a tooth ; so much for an eye ; so much for each drop of blood ; finally, so much for a life. And if the guilty person cannot pay this price, then his own life is at the mercy of the victim's relatives. Such is the law. But it is a point of honour with the relatives of a murdered man not to take money if possible, but to exact their right. Hence arise "blood-feuds." These are principally observed in the south of Persia. There, where every man is armed to the teeth, blood-feuds are common. "I must leave you here, sahib," exclaims your guide, quite as a matter of course ; "I have a blood-feud with the next village, and my life is not safe beyond this point." Sometimes these "blood-feuds" remain unavenged for many years ; the guilty man wisely keeping out of the reach of the avenger of blood by remaining in a village where the other dare

not show his face on account of the Nemesis awaiting him also in that particular district. Time sometimes, though rarely, heals these feuds. A man gets tired of being hunted, of feeling that he may be shot or stabbed or poisoned at any moment, and he compromises: he gives the family of his victim a horse, or money, or so many bags of dates, or perhaps even his daughter in marriage. Or perhaps a youth of twenty will shoot down an aged man, the murderer of his grandfather, whom perhaps he has never seen; and, fleeing to the arms of his delighted mother, will exclaim, "I have avenged our blood!"—thus bringing a blood-feud on his own head. These are some of the results of the universal practice, in the south of Persia, of carrying arms. It must be remembered, too, that the murderer in these cases is not looked upon with horror; he is simply a man who has done his duty. North of Shiraz these blood-feuds are uncommon; and an Ispahani would certainly prefer the price—or, failing that, a decent sum in cash—to judicial revenge. As a rule, in the present day, a murderer is executed, and never handed over to the tender mercies of his victim's friends; but legally the relatives can themselves take the guilty man's life.

The gun is "sanctuary" as an appanage of the Shah himself. So is his stable; the heel-ropes of his horses give impunity to the criminal who holds them; so does the tail of the royal steed, even though the Shah himself be riding him. And the power of giving sanctuary as an appanage of rank is shared by the King's sons and uncles and provincial governors. The Shah and the *grandees* we have named would be

the last to break the right of sanctuary; for in doing it they would commit an impious act. But the "sanctuary" of the royal stable, the gun, etc., has its drawbacks. A criminal may fall into the hands of justice without the rights of sanctuary being actually interfered with. The royal grooms may be forbidden to give him food or water, or may decline to do so; or his relatives may not be allowed to approach him, and so he may be starved into surrender; or the horse, irritated at finding his tail grasped, may by a kick or breaking into a gallop deliver the offender into the hands of his pursuers.

The principal sanctuaries where a criminal is really safe are the holy shrines of Persia, the tombs of saints and the places of pilgrimage, and some mosques; also, to a lesser degree, in the houses of great moollahs and of holy men. Even the abode of the "unclean" Englishman and the offices of the English Government Telegraph Department are looked upon to a certain extent as sanctuary. And rather embarrassing results are produced when "the office" is suddenly entered by a bevy of shrieking women and children, who perhaps flee there for fear of their lives or what is dearer, and remain for days, while their husbands and fathers are being done to death: nominally on account of religion, really to gratify the greed of those in power. An instance of this was seen at Ispahan in the last six years, when two Syuds (holy descendants of the Prophet) were slain, nominally as Baabis; their families taking refuge at the English telegraph office, and their younger brother being only spared on cursing the name of their (false) prophet: which the two elder

brothers had indignantly refused to do, and died accordingly.

Around the great mosques and shrines are generally whole quarters containing bazaars (rows of shops), which also afford sanctuary. Here the criminal, or possibly the innocent suspect, may stay unmolested; he will be able to buy all necessaries, and may even live and earn his living, and ultimately die at a good old age. The priests take good care to preserve the inviolability of such bast for their own sakes. For in the power of protecting the criminal against the secular armies one of the chief sources of their power. Woe to the governor who should attempt to forcibly arrest a man within the sacred precincts. The Shah himself would hardly presume to do so. It has been done, of course; but generally the prisoner had to be surrendered. Guards of soldiers have surrounded shrines to prevent ingress or egress, till the fugitive, in despair, has given himself up. But a popular tumult is always the result, secretly or openly stirred up by the priests; and an excited and fanatical Persian mob, under the influence of their moollahs, is not to be trifled with. .

If it is determined to capture the refugee at any price, recourse is usually had to stratagem, bribery, false promises, or even poison. By one of these means the man is at last secured; but their open employment is very rare. And if the hunted man falls into the hand of his pursuers, it is generally through his own credulity.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE PERSIAN CUISINE AND SHERBETS.

Diet of the labourer—Fruit as food—Cook-shops—Kabābs—Food of the wealthy—Silent dinners—Royal Persian Sherbet—Sherbet-spoons—Sherbets.

THE food of the Persians is very varied. As a rule the very poor do not get meat more than once a week; while villagers and the numerous nomadic tribes see it very rarely, and only on great occasions, as at marriage feasts. The ordinary diet of a labouring man is bread and cheese in winter, bread and fruit in summer. But even the labourers manage to obtain an occasional bowl of strong soup; and they vary their diet with preserves, dried fruits, basins of curds, and hard-boiled eggs. The actual weight of bread that a muleteer or labourer can consume, and does consume, daily is very great, seven pounds not being an extraordinary allowance. In the south of Persia dates are the staple food: they are very cheap and satisfying. During the summer, lettuces, grapes, apricots, onions, and cucumbers form the dainties of the villager; and these with bread, cheese, and curds, are their only food. In every large town cook-shops abound. Sheep are roasted whole in ovens, and sold hot by the slice. The sheep's heads and feet are boiled

separately, and their preparation and sale is a trade in itself. But the edible most in favour among all classes in Persia is the kabāb. There are two varieties of kabāb. One is made from minced mutton, which is chopped with a few onions into a paste as fine as sausage-meat, carefully moulded over a skewer, toasted over a fierce charcoal fire, and sold and eaten hot. This is the kabāb of the bazaar, the delicacy of the lower classes. At the dinner-hour (sunset), and at the breakfast-hour (noon), crowds surround the shops of the kabāb-sellers. Each man carries his bread, which is usually a flexible loaf two feet long, a foot wide, and half-an-inch thick. The customer wraps his kabāb, hot from the fire, in his bread, and either sits down and eats it then and there, or takes the meal home to his family. In any case, a hot dinner of roast meat can be obtained for from one penny to threepence a head; for the price of a single skewer of the steaming delicacy is but a halfpenny. Jars containing about half-a-pint of hot, strong, and savoury meat-soup are sold for a penny. These form the invariable meal of the Persian soldier, if he can afford it. The meat is pounded and served with the soup, or eaten afterwards as a separate *plat*. But in Persia, as in the rest of the East, bread, rice, or dates are the real food—the meat merely the sauce or *bonne bouche*. Persians of all ages are very fond of confectionery, and are constantly devouring sweets. These are generally pure and good; but there is little variety in colour, most of them being white, and nearly all are flavoured with lemon-juice.

The lower-class Persian will eat several pounds of grapes, cucumbers, or apricots for a meal; they eat

onions as we eat apples. Pomegranates and melons are in great demand as food ; and the melons, which run to 14 lb. in weight, are very nutritious. Cucumbers are looked on as a fruit, and are eaten in large quantities by rich and poor. They are not indigestible. Seven pounds' weight may be often had for a halfpenny. Grapes are in infinite variety and of the most delicious kinds, from the huge long grape, which measures 2 in., to the tiny sultana, sweet as honey to the taste. The curds, or *mast*, is simply made by adding a small portion of rennet or else old curds to warmed milk : in a few hours it sets into a mass, the cream on the top. If eaten the first day, it is like a junket ; if allowed to remain, it becomes sour and will keep good any time. In this sour state it is preferred, and is either eaten with honey, sugar, or grape-sugar. Eggs boiled hard, and dyed a gay colour, are much eaten : from forty to fifty can be had for 9d. These things, then, form the cheap and varied diet of the working classes. Beef, too, is eaten by them ; never by the well-to-do.

The townspeople and the wealthy among the Persians devote much attention to good living. Breakfast generally is a comparatively light meal, but consists of several *plats* of varying merit, but always served hot : it is taken about noon. At about eight o'clock at night, dinner is served. Persian cookery is extravagant—partly because the Persians are lavishly hospitable, partly because all house-servants are fed from the leavings of the masters' table. Kabābs of another kind to those we have described take the palm among Persian dishes to the European taste, probably because they are free from grease. Small pieces of lamb, the size of

a walnut, are skewered on a slender rod of iron; two pieces of lean and a piece of the delicate fat of the huge tail of the Oriental sheep are put on alternately, a *soupeçon* of garlic or onion is added, and the *kabāb* is toasted over a fierce fire and handed hot: it is eaten with a little salt and a squeeze of lemon. Pillaws are merely boiled meat, venison, or fowls, smothered in mountains of rice. This rice is delicately boiled, and a little clarified butter is added. We fear to say how much pillaw a Persian will consume. Tiny chickens, quails, pigeons, doves, and young partridges are handed hot, on the spit itself, to each guest. Except the partridge, game is not much appreciated in Persia. The hare is not eaten by the religious, and there are no rabbits. Fish is seldom seen, save on the sea-coast. Entrées of various kinds are served; they are nearly always eaten with boiled rice, which is served plain, without butter, and termed *chillaw*. Among such entrées are the *fizzinjhan*, which consists of a chicken, partridge, or lamb-meat boiled to rags, served hot with a sauce of pounded walnuts, pomegranate-juice, and clarified butter. A similar entrée is made upon the same bases with unripe grapes and butter; another with stewed apricots and butter, or stewed plums of Bokhara and butter. All these are eaten with large quantities of plain boiled rice; seemingly very rich, yet in combination with rice they are to the Persian taste delicious; and Europeans residing in Persia soon appreciate them. Confectionery and pastry are consumed in large quantities. Lambs a week old, and weighing only a few pounds, are roasted whole and tuffed with dates, raisins, chestnuts, pistachios, and

almonds. Ducks, tame or wild, are not much liked. Sherbet, in large china bowls, is always served at dinner. It consists of fruit syrups or *eau sucrée*; it is usually iced, and is drunk from huge wooden spoons. These are sometimes so thin as to be in parts transparent; they are of native manufacture and delicately carved. They are often of great value; and the wealth of a Persian is often shown in the variety and value of his wooden sherbet-spoons.

In its way the Persian cuisine is as scientific as that of France. Everything is good and plentiful; there are no adulterations; the only fault is on the side of profusion. The free use of clarified butter, it must be remembered, is to enable the partaker to swallow the rice which is served with most dishes. Unlike the Turk, the Persian never serves a dish that is nasty. We once saw a Turkish dish which consisted of aubergines stuffed with garlic, stewed in oil and eaten cold! It had the rather appropriate name of "The Imam fainted!"

Persian dinners are always preceded by pipes (hubble-bubbles), while tea and sweets are handed round. Then servants bring in a long leathern sheet and place it on the ground; the guests take their seats round it, squatting on the ground. A flat loaf of bread, of the kind we have described, is placed before each man. Music plays. The dinner is brought in on trays and placed on the ground on the leathern sheet; the covers are removed; the host says "Bismillah" ("In the name of God"), and in silence all fall to with their fingers. There is no talking at dinner; and when it is over all retire to rest or return to their homes at once.

Royal Persian Sherbet. Under this sounding title, most of us have a remembrance of a white effervescing

powder, flavoured with essence of lemons, which in the summer-time was sold to us as children; a large spoonful was stirred into a tumbler of water, cool or the reverse, and known to boys as a "fizzer." It is not to this mawkish draught we wish to draw the reader's attention, but rather to the real thing as used in Persia and throughout the East. Persian sherbet is a very comprehensive term, and there are many varieties of it. Before we come to what it is, it may be as well to explain when and how it is drunk. Sherbet is used as a thirst-quencher, and a cooling drink in hot weather; it is either the drink taken at meals, or it is handed to visitors in warm weather in lieu of coffee. As a drink at meals, it is placed in Chinese porcelain bowls, there being usually several varieties of the sherbet, more or less, according to the size of the party and the position of the host. Each bowl stands in its saucer; and across the vessel is laid one of the pear-wood spoons of Abadeh, famed for their carving and lightness throughout the Eastern world.

A sherbet-spoon is from one to two feet in length; the bowl, cut from a solid block, holds from a claret-glass to a tumbler of the liquid. This bowl is so thin as to be semi-transparent, and is frequently ornamented with an inscription, the letters of which are in high-relief. To retain their semi-transparency, each letter is undercut, so that, although standing up an eighth of an inch from the surface of the bowl, yet the whole is of the same light and delicate texture, no part thicker than another. One-half of the surface of the spoon-bowl is covered by two cleverly applied pieces of carved wood, which appear to be made from one block.

But this is not the case—they are really cemented there. These pieces are made in such a delicate manner as to be almost filmy in appearance, resembling fine lacework. The handle of the spoon—at times twenty inches long—is formed in a separate piece, and inserted into the edge of the bowl in a groove cut to receive it. This handle is also elaborately carved in delicate tracery; and a wonderful effect is produced by the rhomboid-shaped handle, at times four inches broad at the widest part, and only a tenth of an inch thick. The groove where the handle is inserted into the edge of the bowl of the spoon, and the point of junction, are hidden by a rosette of carved wood, circular in shape, only a tenth of an inch thick. This, too, is carved in lace-like work, and it is cemented to the shaft of the spoon. A kind of flying buttress of similar delicate wood-work unites the back part of the shaft to the shoulder of the bowl. The spoon, which, when it leaves the carver's bench, is white, is varnished with Kamān oil, which acts as a waterproof and preservative, and dyes the whole of a fine gamboge yellow, similar to our boxwood. The weight of the spoon is in the largest sizes two ounces.

The tools used by the carver are a plane, a rough sort of gouge, and a common penknife. Each spoon is of a separate and original design, no two being alike, save when ordered in pairs or sets. The price of the finest specimens is from five to fifteen shillings each. These sherbet spoons are really works of art, and are valued by Oriental amateurs. Many of the merchants are very proud of their sherbet spoons; and being wood, they are "lawful;" for a metal spoon, if of

silver, is an abomination ; consequently, the tea-spoons in Persia have a filigree hole in the bowl, and thus can be used for stirring the tea only, and not for the unlawful act of conveying it to the mouth in a *silver* spoon. Of course, these high-art sherbet spoons are only seen at the houses of the better classes, a coarser wooden spoon being used by the lower classes. The spoons at dinner serve as drinking-vessels, for tumblers are unknown ; and the metal drinking-cups so much in use are merely for travelling, or the pottle-deep potations of the irreligious.

During the seven months of Persian summer, it is usual to serve sherbet at all visits, in lieu of coffee, for coffee is supposed to be heating in the hot afternoons, at which time formal visits are often made ; and as the visitor must be given something—for he is never sent empty away—sherbet in glass tankards or *istakans*—a word borrowed from the Russian term for a tumbler—is handed round. These *istakans* are often very handsome, being always of cut or coloured glass, often elaborately gilded and painted in colours, or what is termed jewelled—that is, ornamented with an imitation of gems.

And now, what is Persian sherbet ? A draught of sweetened water flavoured to the taste of the drinker. The only exception to this definition is the sherbet-ikand, or *eau sucrée*, which is simply water in which lump-sugar has been dissolved. The varieties of sherbet may be divided into those made from the fresh juice of fruit, which are mixed with water and sweetened to the taste ; and those made from syrup, in which the juice of fruit has been boiled.

It will be thus seen that the effervescing qualities of

royal Persian sherbet only exist in the imagination of the English confectioner. But there is one all-important point that the English vendor would do well to imitate: Persian sherbet is served very cool, or iced. Blocks of snow or lumps of ice are always dissolved in the sherbet drunk in Persia, unless the water has been previously artificially cooled. Fresh sherbets are usually lemon, orange, or pomegranate; and the first two are particularly delicious. The fresh juice is expressed in the room in the presence of the guest, passed through a small silver strainer, to remove the pips, portions of pulp, &c.; lumps of sugar are then placed in the istakan; water is poured in till the vessel is two-thirds full, and it is then filled to the brim with blocks of ice or snow.

The preserved sherbets are generally contained in small decanters of coloured Bohemian glass similar to the istakans in style. They are in the form of clear and concentrated syrup. This syrup is poured into the bowl or istakan, as the case may be; water is added; the whole is stirred, and the requisite quantity of ice or snow completes the sherbet.

When bowls are used—as they invariably are by the rich at meals, and by the poor at all times—the spoons are dipped into the bowl, and after being emptied into the mouth, are replaced in the bowl of sherbet. Thus the use of glass vessels, until lately very expensive in Persia, is dispensed with. Probably with the continuous introduction of the ugly and cheap, but strong and serviceable, Russian glass, the dainty sherbet-spoon of Abadeh will gradually disappear, the more prosaic tumbler taking its place.

One kind of sherbet is not a fruit-syrup, but a distilled water : this is the sherbet-i-beed-mishk, or willow-flower sherbet. The fresh flowers of a particular kind of willow are distilled with water ; a rather insipid but grateful distilled water is the result. Of this the Persians are immoderately fond, and they ascribe great power to it in the "fattening of the thin." It is a popular and harmless drink, and is drunk in the early morning, not iced, but simply sweetened.

Persians are very particular as to the water they drink, and are as great connoisseurs in it as some Englishmen are curious in wines. The water they habitually drink must be cool, and, if possible, from a spring of good repute. It is often brought long distances in skins daily from the favourite spring of the locality. Given good water, and pleasant, grateful beverages of all sorts, it is easy to refrain from the strong drinks which Mahommed so wisely forbade his followers to indulge in, making drunkenness a crime, and the drunkard an object of disgust and loathing to his fellow-man. Undoubtedly, strong drinks in hot climates, or even in hot weather, are incompatible with good health.

The varieties of the preserved syrups are numerous : orange, lemon, quince, cranberry—the raspberry is unknown in Persia—cherry, pomegranate, apricot, plum, and grape juice ; while various combinations of a very grateful nature are made by mixing two or even three of the above.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WINES OF PERSIA.

Drunkenness—Varieties of wines—Teheran—Kerman—Red Ispahan
—Kishmish—Hamadan—Shiraz.

WINE is, of course, forbidden to all good Mussulmans ; but in Persia it is freely indulged in by the men of the upper classes almost without disguise, and secretly by about a fourth of the rest of the community among the inhabitants of large towns. In villages it is rarely, if ever, seen. Unfortunately, the drinking Persian is nearly always a drunkard ; he does not take wine from any idea of its cheering influence. He holds orgies and drinks till he drops. Drinking in Persia always culminates in drunkenness ; and consequently arrack, which is spirits-of-wine more or less pure, is the favourite drink. As well as being more potent it is more portable ; and in a country where there are no wheeled vehicles, and where casks are unknown, this is a serious consideration.

The varieties of wine are :—The Teheran, an abominable concoction made of watered grapes mixed with vine-leaves, and supposed to resemble claret. The Kerman wine is strong, rough, and carelessly made.

It will keep ; and much resembles the Kakheité wine of the Caucasus, less the flavour of the wine-skin. The wine of Ispahan is fairly good. It resembles a light port ; or, more correctly, the sweet French wine Mas-deu. It improves with age, if made from grapes that have not recently been irrigated. There is another variety of Ispahan wine made from the sultana raisin ; it is termed Kishmish. It is a powerful wine of an unpleasant taste ; but is much liked by the Armenians, who prefer it to any other kind. All these wines can be purchased for from 3*d.* to 6*d.* per bottle.

There are, however, two wines made in Persia that would not disgrace any European cellar—the wines of Hamadan and Shiraz. Hamadan wine is a delicious pale white wine, with a powerful natural bouquet, resembling Moselle. It is, when new, rather too sweet. It is a very heady wine ; and, unfortunately, it will only keep in bulk. The Hamadanis have large earthen jars, which are sunk a yard deep in the ground. As the climate is very cold, they make a regular hotbed of horse-manure round the upper part of the wine-jars, just as we prepare for the growing of cucumbers. Each jar holds from six to eight hundred bottles. But the hotbed system does not always succeed : so cold is the Hamadan winter that the wine, frozen into a solid mass, has at times to be chopped out in blocks. The wine of Hamadan is sold in glass bottles thinner and lighter than Florence flasks, and unprotected by wicker-work. These fragile bottles, when full, travel well merely packed in loose straw, the cases holding them being not nailed together, but sewn with string. The price is 6*d.* a bottle. The queen of Persian wines,

however, is the Shiraz. This has been justly celebrated by the poets of Persia, and is known, by reputation at least, throughout the East. Shiraz wine is a white wine which when new is sweet, but soon loses its sweetness to become a dry wine of great potency, of delicate aroma, and having a nutty flavour. Unless carefully made, and the husks and stalks quickly removed from the fermenting must at the proper time, its strongly astringent properties are apt to become exaggerated, and the curiously dry wine to be converted into an unpleasantly bitter one. Good Shiraz wine three years old resembles nothing so much as the best virgin sherry—a kind of wine seldom seen, and only appreciated by connoisseurs. Shiraz wine becomes pale by keeping, till at last, say after ten years, it is simply colourless, resembling Sauterne in appearance; as the colour goes the nutty flavour increases, but a peculiar taste resembling sweet spirits-of-nitre is developed. This peculiarity is shared by old sherries and madeiras. As soon as the wine has been cleared off from the lees, it is placed in carboys containing from ten to three dozen quarts. A piece of rag or cotton-wool is placed in the mouth of each carboy, and a handful of mud or plaster-of-Paris is dabbed on, merely to keep out the dust and to seal the bottle. So little are the Persians anxious to exclude the air, that often the pinch of cotton-wool only is used. It must be remembered that the air of Persia is so dry that a polished knife-blade, if protected from rain, remains undulled and unruined at the end of a year. Wine must be good indeed that will stand the continuous exposure to the air, with no added spirit and no pro-

tecting film of oil such as the Italians use. Shiraz wine has, at the hammer, fetched the (for Persia) unprecedented price of 1s. 6d. a bottle; the price of old Shiraz wine, however, is usually about 9d. By old is meant three years in bottle, or rather in carboy. At times the wine is stored in jars of burnt clay, the insides having been greased. A Persian epicure's idea of a prime bottle of wine is realized by placing a small sealed porous clay bottle floating in one of the wine-jars; this, of course, fills and sinks. At the end of several years the wine-jar is broached, and the clay bottle is removed and opened with much ceremony, being supposed to contain the real "essence" of the wine. This is mere fancy; at any rate, it would require the palate of a veritable expert to detect any difference between the contents of the bottle and that of the jar.

The making of the wine is an anxious process. Many natives have their wine made by Jews. But the Mussulmans generally, save the more bigoted, have no objection to lend a hand. The grapes are trodden out in a tank, which exists in every rich man's cellar; or, failing that, in pans. All unripe, broken, or mouldy grapes are previously removed; the jars, ranged in rows, and each holding from 150 to 200 bottles, are now filled—juice, stalks, and husks being shot into them. The jars are covered with a cloth. Fermentation in the hot climate of Shiraz soon sets in. For many days the must in the jars is frequently agitated by a circular movement of the hand; the great friction thus produced disintegrates the grape-pulp. Day by day the cake, consisting of husks and stalks, which

forms on the surface of the wine, becomes thinner and thinner. As the fermentation increases, the heat given out by the fermenting must makes the room or cellar warmer. The wine intended for keeping is made as fruity as possible by the early removal of stalks and husks. On about the twenty-fourth day fermentation will have almost ceased, and the wine is roughly cleared. A lodah, or grape-hamper, is placed in the mouth of an empty wine-jar; the must is baled into it in bucketfuls. Being thus freed of all remaining husks, stones, and stalks, it is now wine, though of the colour and consistence of thin pea-soup. The jars are covered with a rushen top and clayed over, to remain for a year untouched. The refuse is placed in a still and converted into arrack; a third distillation gets it considerably over proof. This arrack is generally in Persia flavoured with fresh anise-seed, and by the same means coloured a pale green. The distillation of the refuse generally more than pays for the cost of making the wine, except the prime cost of the grapes. The next autumn the wine, now clear, may be drunk, or placed in carboys for future consumption. It is now clear; of a rich golden colour, sweet, very delicious, and terribly intoxicating. Next year it darkens, and becomes drinkable by the connoisseur. Year by year it improves in flavour, and does not lose in strength; but the colour fades, as has been stated. Much skill is required in getting a good brew; but if ordinary precautions are observed, success is certain. I was fortunate in securing the services of a moollah, or priest, to make my wine; and the holy man was an expert truly. He used to enliven his labours by

quotations from the Koran and songs from Hafiz The true Cholar grape, of which the best Shiraz wine is made, comes from a place fifty miles off. Wine-making in Persia is a troublesome business, for during its progress thousands of wasps are attracted by the luscious smell of the fermenting must. Persian wine, then—at all events, Shiraz wine—is pure and cheap, and all who have tasted it acknowledge that it is extremely good. Shiraz, too, is famed for its bulbuls (nightingales) and its sweet-smelling moss-roses.





CHAPTER XIX.

A PERSIAN DINNER-PARTY.

The Persians *chez eux*—The fate of the guests—An invitation—My procession—Scene on arrival—"Pipes!"—The revel—Music—Singing—A Persian surgeon—The mouse—The Lūti—Gambling—Home.

IN Mahommedan countries generally, there is a greater gravity, a greater appearance of austerity in public, and a more apparent mortification of the flesh, than with us. Grave faces are seldom seen to smile; the corners of the mouth are more often drawn down than up. But this apparent solemnity is much produced by the numerous rules of etiquette, a breach of any of which would cause a serious depreciation in the social position of the man who was guilty of it.

As a rule, the Oriental, more particularly the higher-class Persian, has two entities—one of the silent and solemn pundit, speaking only in whispers, and with either the Spartan brevity of Yes and No, or launching out into complimentary phrases, as insincere as they are poetic—a being clad in long flowing garments of price, behatted or beturbaned, according to his class, and with a knowledge of the little niceties of form and phrase that would do credit to an experienced Lord

Chamberlain. Priests, lawyers, merchants, the courtier and soldier classes, all are thus; for a single public slip from the code of ceremonial etiquette would cause at once a loss of caste. In fact, at first, to the new-comer they seem all Pharisees, and wear their phylacteries broad. Such are the upper-class Persians outside their own homes, and from sunrise to sunset. It is of the Oriental in his other phase, and among his friends, or "cup-companions" as Lane in his 'Arabian Nights' translates the word, that I have to tell—in fact, the Persian at home.

Some years have elapsed since I went to the little dinner I am about to describe; the giver and some of the guests have submitted to the irony of fate—two dead in their beds, a noteworthy thing among the grandees or wealthy in Persia; one executed for so-called high-treason, really murdered, after having surrendered himself to the king's uncle under an oath of safety for his life; another judicially done to death because he was rich. One, then the greatest and richest of the party, is eating in a corner the bread of charity, blind and poor; one young fellow, then a penniless parasite, little more than a servant without pay, who handed pipes and ran messages, is now in high employ, and likely to become a minister. Others of that party would now be glad to hand his pipes and run his messages for the mere sake of his protection. It was this young fellow who brought me my invitation—a verbal one. "Mirza M—— Khan sends you his salaams, and hopes you will eat your dinner at his house at an hour after sunset to-night. Will your honour come?"

"Please to sit. I hope you are well. Who is to be there? Any Europeans?"

"No; only yourself. At least, there is one—the Swedish doctor; and as he has been so many years here, he is more a Persian than ourselves. And, hakim-sahib [European doctor], will you, the Khan says, bring two packs of cards?"

"Ah, Mirza, the secret's out; it's not me they want, but my two packs of cards."

"No, hakim-sahib. By your head, it's not so. You don't know the Khan—at, least, not in private. He is good-nature itself; and he wants you to come to eat his dinner, to taste his salt. Besides, Gholam Nahdi is to be there, and there will be dancing. Ba! an entertainment to dwell in the memory."

Now, the fact of the dancing intrigued me. I knew that Mirza M—— Khan did not merely invite me for the sake of the cards, as he could have had them for the asking. I was anxious to see an entertainment in the house of a rich man, so I resolved to go.

"On my eyes, Mirza!"

This the current expression for an affirmative, a respectful affirmative, meaning that I would certainly do myself the honour.

The Mirza declined a pipe, as he had other errands to fulfil; asked leave to depart, as is the custom, and bowed himself out.

I had gladly accepted, for I wished to see the dancing, of which I had heard much, and also the performance of impromptu farces or interludes, for which the lūtis (buffoons) of Shiraz are celebrated throughout Persia; for it was in Shiraz itself that the invitation was

given; and it was in the house of one of its local grandees that the entertainment was to take place. If, then, I was ever to see a real Oriental entertainment, now was my time, in the city of Saadi and Hafiz, in the real Persian heart of Persia. Mirza M—— Khan was a grandee, and I knew personally very little of him, save that he was very wealthy, very good-natured, and a very good patient, in the sense that he was grateful for work done and remunerated it with no niggard hand.

At the appointed time, I rode through the narrow, dusty streets of the town, as was the custom, having quite a little procession of my own. Was I not going out to dinner? and among Persians, to invite a guest is to invite his servants too; consequently, even to the cook's disciple, they were all there to accompany me. When I remonstrated at so large a following, my head-man told me that "I really must allow him to keep up my dignity in a proper way." The only servant left in my house was the doorkeeper, and he was obliged to stay to guard it; the rest all came. First went my two carpet-spreaders, crying "Out of the way!" each carrying a big stick, and girded, as is the custom, with the short, straight, hiltless sword called a kammar, the sharp point of which would nearly always be fatal if thrust with; but it fortunately is almost invariably used merely to hack; and unless the skull be fractured, merely lets out some of the hot Persian blood, and so the frequent quarrel ends. Then came the cook, an artist in his way. He, doubtless, would give a helping hand with the dinner. With him was the table-man, who strutted in all the

glory of a bright blue moiré antique tunic ; a smart black lambskin cap of the latest fashion, cocked knowingly ; a silver watch-chain, and my silver kalian or water-pipe ; for, though one is provided with these and tobacco galore, every man brings his own ; and a European, if wise, invariably followed the custom, for it prevented little hitches, such as that of some holy man or priest being obliged to refuse to smoke the pipe of the dog of an unbeliever, or of a special hubble-bubble being handed to the Giaour for his sole delectation. No visit, much less entertainment, in Persia can be made without the frequent introduction of the water-pipe. Certainly it fills up gaps when the conversational powers of guests or visitors flag ; and it is an inexhaustible subject of conversation ; besides, it is the poetry and perfection of smoking. With the table-man walked the sherbetdar, or sherbet and ice-maker. He would, doubtless, make himself useful. But I fear he went for the more than Homeric feast which he knew would be gladly spread for even the humblest hanger-on of any guest. Then, at my horse's head walked my groom, carrying over his arm the embroidered cloth that is thrown over my horse when standing, to preserve him from draughts, and the saddle from sun and dust. They, too, both horse and groom, would be entertained as a matter of course. Such is the lavishness of Eastern hospitality. My head-man, in a long blue cloth cloak, marched at my side, more with the air of a humble friend than that of a servant. Thus, these men did their duty by me in keeping up my position, while at the same time they were well fed at my host's expense. And pro-

bably had I gone alone, the first inquiry would have been: "Where are your servants, doctor?"

In honour of my host, I had donned a black frock-coat; and as the temperature was about eighty, my sufferings were great; but in the East, a cut-away coat is indecorous; and my linen suits unfortunately were made in the usual shooting-coat shape. After some half-hour's ride through tortuous and evil-smelling lanes, by mosques and through bazaars, in and out of repair, we came to the large mud-plastered portico of Mirza M—— Khan's house. At the door was a sentry, who saluted. I dismounted, my servants—as is the custom—supporting me under the arm-pit.

"The Khan is expecting you—be pleased to enter," said a grave and well-clad domestic, who proceeded to usher me into the house.

I was shown into the *berūni*, or men's apartments. A paved courtyard, some thirty yards by ten, with sunken beds of common flowers on either side, and many orange-trees covered with their dark-green fruit; a raised tank or *hauz* of running water, twenty yards by three, with playing-jets; a crowd of servants with pipes. These struck my eye as I passed up to the further end, where I saw my host seated at the open window of a large room. Although quite light, the whole place was ablaze with lamps and candles in rows. On a carpet in the courtyard sat the Jewish musicians, who played their loudest on the usual instruments of torture—the tambourine, two hand-drums, a kind of fiddle, and a sort of guitar, while an old man made night hideous by drumming on a horrible kind of military drum called a *dohol*, a thing that I have seen,

except on this occasion, used at Eastern weddings only. Happily, he varied the dreadful performance by eldritch solos on a two-tubed flute, such as that we see in Roman processions on ancient buildings. Singers, too, made night hideous. But all these men were fortunately in the open air, and their performance was not so deafening when one entered the room.

“Ah, hakim-sahib!” said my host, rising. “Bismillah! be seated; pray be seated.”

All the guests on my entry had risen from the ground on which they sat. I was placed on a seat of honour, far above my social deserts, and introduced to those of the guests with whom I was unacquainted. The rest, whom I knew, all shook hands with me.

“Pipes!” shouted Mirza M—— Khan—“pipes!”

A train of servants now entered the room. Each man brought his master’s pipe. Conversation became general; the music played on. The bubbling noise of the water-pipes, the profusion of lights, the gay dresses of the whole party, the handsome carpets, the floridly-decorated walls, the flowing water of the fountains, and the bright moon hanging over the orange-trees, gave one the feeling that one was “revelling.” There is no other word. Tea in tiny cups is handed. More pipes, more tea! Still the music, still the singing, or rather noise, to which nobody listens, of recited poetry howled in a crescendo scale. More guests, more pipes, more tea! All are assembled. Outer cloaks and heavy garments are thrown off, for the night is warm.

“What is this, hakim-sahib?” said the Khan, pointing to my frock-coat. “You must be hot.”

I explained that my little white linen cut-aways were not formal enough for the aristocratic assemblage to which I had had the honour to be invited.

“Bah! Send for one. Make yourself at home.”

The order is given by my servant; and my groom gallops off, and soon returns with ease and coolness.

“A colleague of yours is come,” I am told in a whisper; “he is about to astonish you. You see the bearded Khan I introduced you to; he is S—— Khan, general of cavalry. He has a needle in his back. The surgeon, Agha Ali, will come here and remove it. He doesn’t consult you, as he doesn’t believe in European doctors.”

Here trays of sweetmeats, salted almonds, pistachios, and other nuts, are brought in; wine in decanters; arrack, either in the form of pure spirits-of-wine, or flavoured and coloured green by the infusion of the fresh leaves of anise-seed. We all eat the sweetmeats, nibble the nuts, and most help themselves to wine or arrack.

My friend beckons to the cavalry general, who comes over and squats next me. I am introduced. After the usual glowing Eastern compliments, S—— Khan gives me a list of all his ills from birth. I am obliged to listen. The Persian custom is, whenever you meet a doctor, consult him. I learn that the Khan at present suffers from lumbago, and that he has obtained relief by acupuncture; that he has a special confidential valet, who is in the habit each morning of inserting an ordinary sewing-needle for more than an inch in the seat of pain; but that this morning the needle had been inserted, and then had disappeared. The general rapidly removes his clothing, and exposes

his back. There are innumerable scars of acupuncture. I gravely examine the back.

"Ah, there, there it is!" he shouts.

I am compelled to frankly inform him that the needle has probably been lost, and is not in his body.

He is most indignant. "Ah, you Europeans, you Europeans, you never will believe! Why, Agha Ali, the jerrah [surgeon] says it's there, and it must be there. Besides, he is going to extract it by the mouse."

"By the what?" I say in astonishment.

"The mouse. Don't you understand *that*?"

"No. What mouse?"

"Ah, science! ah, Europeans! he doesn't understand the action of the mouse!"

A chorus of explanations is now afforded me. A live mouse is to be bound on the bare back of the general, and by some occult means the needle will leave his body, and be found in that of the mouse.

I laugh, and remain incredulous. The pooh of scorn is my only answer.

"Will you believe it if you see it?"

"Yes; I am open to conviction."

"Ah, you soon will; he will be here directly."

The coming of my Oriental *confrère* is expected eagerly by me. There is no sign of dinner, though eight o'clock. I munch my salted nuts, and ask what kind of needle has been used.

"A European needle—one of these."

The confidential valet produces a packet of No. 8—an ordinary English sewing-needle.

"Are these what you use?"

"Yes. Always these; never any other. The one

that is in the Khan's back—may I be his sacrifice—was one of these out of this very packet.”

The Khan here puts his finger to the exact spot, and his face expresses agony.

At this moment I see my *confrère* coming up the courtyard. No one makes way for him. The native surgeon is evidently not a person of distinction, as the native physician is; he is merely a little tradesman, in social status below his rival the barber. Where the functions of the one end and the other begin is very doubtful. The barber bleeds, cups, draws teeth, reduces dislocations, performs the actual cautery and various other needful operations. The surgeon does all these things; probes and prods at gunshot wounds; looks at fractures and tumours; has a few strange mediæval instruments, which, like a clever man, he seldom uses; and in cases of surgical emergency, he looks wise, and never, or hardly ever, interferes. I was, however, now to have an opportunity of seeing a Persian surgical operation.

Agha Ali does not attempt to enter the room till bidden by my host with a loud “Bismillah!” Then, stooping humbly, his hands carefully covered by his ragged cloak, whose amplitude hides the numerous deficiencies of the rest of the poor fellow's wardrobe, he enters the room.

“Salaam!”—in a loud tone.

To this salutation no one responds, and the surgeon humbly seats himself in the lowest corner. I felt for the man, and to put him at his ease, attempted to converse with him; but he took no notice of my remarks. Was I not a rival and an unbeliever?

S—— Khan, however, ordered him to examine his back; and on his doing so with much parade—listening carefully for the needle with an old stethoscope! the wrong end of which he applied to the general's august person—he formally declared that the needle was deeply seated. But, "Please God," said he, "by my science and by the help of the sainted martyrs Houssein and Hassan, I shall remove it!"

I now could perceive, from the looks of conviction of my fellow-guests, that *I* was looked on as the impostor, and that my ragged *confrère* had the confidence of the spectators.

It was now explained to me that the native surgeon proposed to affix a live mouse to the patient's back; and that, after a time, the needle would, by some mysterious power, be drawn from the body of the sufferer into that of the unoffending little quadruped. Of course so monstrous a proposition was received by me with the silent derision it deserved. I knew that some trick would be played. But what? Probably there was no needle at all in the sufferer's back; the pain possibly would be cured by playing on his imagination. But how?

"Bring a mouse," said our host; and several servants scurried off to execute the order. In a large Persian house, there is no difficulty in finding a mouse in the traps, or in the earthen jars in which grain is kept.

"May it please you, Excellency, may I be your sacrifice, I have a mouse ready," said my surgical rival, taking a small flat tin box from his pocket.

There was a hum of expectation. The certainty of a deception of some sort caused me to watch the

fellow narrowly. He opened the box very cautiously ; a poor little mouse, a silken ligature affixed to each foot, was in it. He was alive ; no doubt of that, but securely tied. When taken up, he gave a squeak of pain.

That squeak decided me : I saw the thing at a glance. "Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that you are able to extract the needle from the Khan's back, and make it enter the body of the mouse?" I asked, open-mouthed, with feigned astonishment.

"Assuredly," calmly replied the surgeon. "With Heaven's and the blessed Prophet's help, I shall certainly do so."

"Ah," I replied ; "this is indeed a wonderful thing! Agha Ali, the surgeons of Persia have in you a burning and shining light ; but your trick is old (here he turned pale).—Observe, my friends. Hey, Presto, pass!—Khan, the needle has left you, and is *now* in the poor mouse's body."

For the surgeon to close the box, in which was the mouse, and spring to his feet, was the work of an instant.

"What is this that the sahib says? What nonsense is this? If the sahib can cure the Khan's pain, why send for me? I am insulted. Let me go!"

But all to no purpose. The box was snatched from him. As I supposed, *the* needle—that is to say, *a* needle—was already there, slipped slily in under the loose skin of the little animal's back. I asked to be allowed to look at it, and requested that it might be compared with the needles in the Khan's packet. It was half-an-inch too short!

There was no doubt. S—— Khan was furious. "Take him away!" shouted he, almost foaming with rage—nothing a Persian dislikes so much as to be over-reached—"take him away! I shall attend to his matter in the morning."

A general of cavalry, particularly in Persia, is a great man, and his manner of attending to the affairs of those who have offended him is rough. Two black-bearded soldier-servants hustled the disappointed charlatan out of the room. S—— Khan felt almost well already. The mouse ran away, silken bonds and all; and I begged the absent surgeon off with some difficulty.

"I make you a present of him," said S—— Khan.

This little episode had made the time pass. There was as yet (nine P.M.) no sign of dinner, though roasted quails, smoking hot on the spit, had been handed one to each person, as a sort of stop-gap. Most of the guests began to drink, some heavily.

A little wiry man in a pair of bathing-drawers, and otherwise naked, now entered the room. He juggled; he sang; he played on various instruments; he improvised. He and his son acted a little impromptu farce, in which the priests were mercilessly mimicked; then he did all the tricks of the European contortionist; then he turned somersaults amid a forest of *sharp* daggers, point upwards; then he ate fire; and finally took a header while vomiting flames into the tank below. This man was Gholam Nahdi, the celebrated buffoon. For his performance, he would get his dinner and perhaps five shillings of our money.

"Where are the cards, sahib? Hakim-sahib, where are the cards?"

I sent for my servant, who produced them.

"Bismillah! let us play," shouted Mirza M—— Khan.

"Let us play," assented the guests.

They all set to, at a kind of lansquenet. All were wealthy men, and as they gambled only for silver coin, not much harm was done. Like a Christmas party of children at Pope Joan, how they shouted; and how they cheated, openly, most openly! He who cheated most was happiest, and the only disgrace was in being found out. S—— Khan, who sat next to me, had a method of cheating so simple, so Arcadian in its simplicity, that it deserves description. He lost, lost persistently; but his heap did not perceptibly diminish. I watched him. His plan was this. When he won, he put his winnings on his heap of coin. When he lost, he would carefully count out the amount of money he had to pay. "Sixty kerans; ah! Correct, you see—sixty." He would then gather it up in his two hands, place the closed hands on his own heap, let out the greater part of the sixty silver coins on his heap, and opening his closed hands from below upwards, apparently paid his losses into the pile of his successful adversary with a "Much good may they do you! Another sixty kerans."

After about an hour of this, the music and singing having been going on unceasingly, dinner was announced. The money was pocketed, or handed over to the care of servants. A long sheet of embroidered leather was spread on the ground; over this was placed a sheet of hand-printed chintz, some twelve feet by four; bowls of sherbet (iced syrups and water) were

laid at intervals; and the various dishes, filled each to overflowing, and mostly swimming in fat, were placed in circular trays before every six guests. A plentiful dinner—no Barmecide feast. Lambs roasted whole, stuffed with dates, almonds, raisins, and pistachionuts; sparrow and pomegranate soup; kabābs of lambs and antelope; all the thousand-and-one delicacies of the Persian cuisine—chillaws, pillaws, curries, fowls boiled and roast. All was good, well-cooked, and lavish; for each man had some half-dozen servants with him, who would dine on the leavings; and our host had certainly fifty servants, all of whom would get a meal off these crumbs from the rich man's table.

Just as dinner was finishing, a grand display of fireworks took place; and that and dinner over, we all bade our host good-bye, and rode home through the dark streets, lighted only by the lanterns which were carried by our servants; and the only sounds to be heard besides our horses' hoofs were the barking of the street dogs, and the strangely human cry of the jackals. It was twelve at night, and Shiraz was fast asleep.





CHAPTER XX.

HAVE WE A POLICY IN PERSIA ?

M. Chirol—Russia bribes and decorates—Our waning influence—
Persia as a recruiting-ground—The mud wall—Persian soldiers.
—Infantry—Cavalry—Persia may be bought.

QUOTING the opinion of some one vaguely defined as “a distinguished diplomatist who resided some years ago at Teheran,” M. Valentine Chirol, in the ‘Fortnightly Review,’ branded Persia and the Persians as *le dernier des pays et le dernier des peuples*. As the only distinguished diplomatists who have resided in Teheran within recent times for a period long enough to make their opinion of value are the late Mr. Charles Alison and the present Russian Chancellor, M. de Giers, or Sir Ronald Thomson, we are bound to conclude that the opinion in question must be that of one of these authorities. It is quite conceivable that the late Russian Ambassador to the Court of Teheran may have looked on Mazenderan and Ghilan as already Russian; in which case the rest of Persia might be justly considered *le dernier des pays*. But that the people can be characterized by the term employed I deny. As well might the Gibraltar “rock-scorpion” be taken as the typical Spaniard as the average Teherani loafer be

supposed to represent the Persian. The Persian of the upper classes has his share of all Oriental vices. M. Chirol's accusation against the governing classes are true. Above all things the Persian is mercenary. The Russians know this, and wisely take advantage of it. With semi-civilized or barbarous nations a bribe is a cheaper expedient than an expedition. For half the sum we are expending on the ridiculous mission of Sir Peter Lumsden, we could administer when needed a very large bribe indeed to the Shah ; and if we are to continue to oppose Russia in the East, we must not hesitate to employ her own weapons.

Persia is certainly not *une quantité négligeable* in Asiatic politics. On the contrary, Persia is the natural "buffer" between Russian interests and our own. It is quite true that the Czar could by raising his finger occupy Ghilan and Mazenderan, and that the inhabitants of those provinces would welcome Russian rule: but the rest of Persia would not be so easily swallowed. Vast deserts separate the small oases of cultivated ground, and a march even as far as Teheran would not be without its difficulties. But the bribe that would be most acceptable would be Herat. It is a far cry from Persia to England, and the Shah, although impressed with our importance as a nation of traders, does not believe in our fighting power. Besides he is under the shadow of the Russian eagle ; and Russian gold weighs more with him than reams of diplomatic foolscap. Then Russia not only bribes ; she decorates. We certainly did give the King of Persia the Garter, and his Prime Minister the G.C.S.I. But we have passed over the Zil-es-Sultan, the most powerful man in Persia.

The Russians were not so foolish, and sent M. Pokhitanoff to confer on him at Ispahan the Order of the Eagle. The Prince's delight was something childlike, and the toy cost nothing. There is no shadow of doubt that the Zil-es-Sultan will ultimately become Shah; for the Valliad (or heir apparent) is a *crétin* and bigot—a nonentity in the hands of priests, day by day falling lower in his father's estimation, out of favour, and unpopular : yet we do nothing to win the rising man's favour. The Zil-es-Sultan is a vigorous and fortunate governor; his popularity is immense. Are we content that he should become a Russian protégé?

Our influence in Persia, thanks to ourselves, is next to nothing. We have few resident British subjects who are really Englishmen. A few sorry Armenians in Bushire rejoice in British protection, which in Persia means little more than exemption from the stick. We certainly have a Consul-General at Tabriz, a Vice-Consul at Resht, and a Resident and Consul-General at Bushire; but this latter is rather an Indian than an imperial official. Our small and constantly changing Embassy at Teheran is hardly calculated to impress the Persian mind, save by the magnificence of its quarters. We have a few native agents on starvation pay, which they eke out by a nominal interpretership to the English Government Telegraph Department in Persia. The Telegraph Department has certainly secured the respect of those among the natives who come in contact with its officers; but the *éclat* it possessed in the old days of Captains Pierson and St. John (now Sir Oliver) has passed away. England to the Persian is a mere phrase, Russia a power, a power to bow down to, and to fear.

Russian subjects are protected, English ones take their chance as a rule. Our present Minister at the Court of Teheran (Sir Ronald Thomson) was lucky in a long apprenticeship to the late Mr. Alison, a former minister, who was the favourite secretary of that great diplomatist Lord Stratford de Redcliffe; and he has the advantage of a long residence in Persia and an accurate acquaintance with the language, traditions, and foibles of the Persians. Nevertheless, in spite of his abilities and exertions, the influence of Russia, supported as it is by Russian intrigue and Russian gold, is paramount.

What we seem to lose sight of, in ignoring Persia as the *quantité négligeable*, is that the country is the finest recruiting-ground in Asia. English officers of the practical type have frequently asserted that material for making some of the smartest soldiery in the world is to be found in Persia. The Persian soldier is brave, active, and hardy. His physique is magnificent, and his power of endurance great. Upon dry bread, with an occasional bit of cheese or a basin of curds, the Persian will think nothing of marching his thirty miles a day for days in succession. And the Persian soldier, if not perhaps as tall as our ordinary linesman, is as heavy, and as strongly built. Only feed him and pay him, and the Persian sepoy, essentially a mercenary, will be as faithful to his colours as any soldier in Asia. So much for the infantry. As for the cavalry, as irregulars they are probably the finest in the world. No rocky pass is too steep, no march too long. The Eelauts, or wandering tribes, such as the Baktiaris, Kashkais, etc., can supply their fearless horsemen in tens of thousands. Why are the

Government cavalry in Persia so ragged, and their poor nags but skin and bone? Simply because they generally get neither pay, forage, nor rations. Start on a fortnight's march of some 300 miles with a Persian horse-soldier or two: at the end of it he and his horse are the picture of health and condition. And why? Because they have been fed. We talk of the Cossacks. Three years ago the Shah had three Cossack-dressed regiments, drilled by Europeans and regularly paid; a finer body of men and horses it was impossible to see.

The government of Persia, as long as it is carried on by Persians, will be what it has been from time immemorial. Persia does not change; it merely decays. In the East, the sign of an improvident husbandman is the unrepaired boundary-wall between himself and the next proprietor. True, the wall is but mud; but still it is a wall, and the wise man attends to it. Persia is a wall, though only a mud wall, which stands as a barrier between us and Russia. We are allowing the barrier to fall without an effort. We are handing over to Russia or Russian influence hordes of brave and hardy soldiers who would overrun India as their ancestors have done before them. A very little money spent in Persia judiciously goes a long way; and, properly managed, Persia might have been of enormous service to us in harassing the Russian advance. But here also, perhaps, it is now too late.

Now, Persia is not likely to take part in the disputes of England and Russia unless she is compelled to do so. But Persia is well worth consideration, either as the tool of Russia or as the well-paid mercenary of England. The standing army of Persia on the peace

footing is only 30,000 ; but twice as many more, hardy fellows and amenable to strict discipline, are available at a moment's notice. There is a strong *esprit de corps* among Persian soldiers. They are not loved by the populace, and consequently are obliged to stand by one another. They are as a rule athletic and wiry, and capable of enduring great privations ; they will fight well if only well led and fairly fed and paid. Sir Henry Rawlinson, who was for five years in the Shah of Persia's army, says that "if the Persian material were placed at the disposal of a European Power who would encourage and take care of the men and develop their military instincts, a fine working army, very superior to anything that Turkey could produce, might be obtained in a very short period of time." Sir Charles MacGregor remarks of the cavalry that "if not the best light horsemen in the world, they are the cheapest." The same authority states that the artillery are "rough-and-ready." And in truth the Persian is no fine-weather soldier ; nor is he a mere fighting machine. Hardy and of powerful physique, he is at the same time very intelligent, amenable to discipline, sober, and ready to follow his officers if he can only trust them. It is the officering that is the worst of it. Promotion in the Persian army, like everything else in Persia, is to be bought. The emoluments of the officer are not his pay (which he expects to get only a tithe of) ; but the bribes he can exact from those he is enabled to annoy or oppress, the pay he can withhold from his already mulcted subordinates, and the labour he can extort from the rank-and-file. The Persian soldier, of whatever branch, is the beau-ideal of the

mercenary. He will endure fatigue to excess, and fight well if he is only drilled and paid; and above all he is cheap. His uniform, of dyed cotton stuff, costs at first hand less than a pound. His pay of less than £3 a year, if it only reached him, he would be well satisfied with. His rations consist of two-pennyworth of bread per diem. But by working as a labourer he yet manages to get a basin of savoury soup for his evening meal, and to find himself in little comforts and even luxuries. But it is not alone in rations, uniform, and pay that the Persian soldier is cheap. A dozen mules to carry the light tents are all that is provided by the government of the Shah for the transport of a whole regiment. Almost every private owns a donkey, which carries his baggage; and so a Persian regiment of infantry presents a curious appearance on the march—some men riding on their animals, others leading or driving them. Of course, this is only seen in times of peace. The Persian soldier will march continually from twenty to forty miles a day; and at the end of the journey he sits down and smokes his pipe, eats his dry bread, mends his clothes, and thinks himself lucky if the water at the halting-place is not salt.

The cavalry are also very efficient. Their ill-fed horses are always in hard training; about £8 is the extreme cost of a remount. The Persian cavalry soldier has been a trained horseman from childhood; and he is usually a good shot, both from the saddle and on foot. The ordinary day's journey for a horseman marching continuously is twenty-four to thirty miles—over tracks unworthy of the name of roads, in mountainous country, and in any weather. The pay of the

cavalryman is much the same as the foot-soldier's; but he finds his own weapons—a native rifle, a short straight sword, and perhaps a pistol—and has a daily ration of $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of bread, and 7 lbs. of barley and 14 lbs. of chaff for his horse. The poor wretch generally sells the greater portion of this fodder, and so his unfortunate steed is usually mere skin and bone. But start on the march with a Persian sowar, and if *you* feed the man's horse it is sure to arrive at the journey's end fat, fit, and well. It is merely chronic starvation that gives these poor beasts their sorry appearance. All the cavalry mounts in Persia are entire horses; they do not as a rule run over fourteen hands and a-half, but they are hardy, active, and sure-footed; as a rule they are also fast. They are great weight-carriers; for the sowar always carries saddle-bags, in which are all his worldly goods, also his bed-clothes and the night clothing for his horse. In this clothing of thick felt the Persian horse is perfectly independent of the stable.

Such being the “raw material” in Persia, are we wise in abandoning the country to the influence of Russia? Persia, as a Power, is perhaps a “*quantité négligeable* ;” but she will furnish to the highest bidder hordes of hardy mercenaries—half-trained, it is true, but only wanting intelligent leadership and regular pay to be transformed from their present condition, which is that of an ill-disciplined and hungry rabble, into a formidable army. Is it not possible that the descendants of the men who marched to Delhi under Nadir Shah may yet be dangerous to us? Is it quite prudent to permit Russian officers to drill, equip, and

command three regiments of so called "Persian Cossacks" under the very nose of our Minister at Teheran? We used to send instructors to the Persian army; so did the Austrians. But now the Russian drill-sergeant and Russian influence are paramount; while England, her influence gone and her trade a shadow, has fallen into contempt.

There was a time—a time not very long distant—when we could make our wishes commands to most Oriental potentates. Unfortunately, that time has gone by. In Persia we are now principally known as buyers of opium and sellers of McCabe's watches, Rogers's cutlery, and prints and shirtings. The Persians now say that menaces from England would be mere idle words. Their expressive term *pooch*—empty and worthless—is always applied by them to our timid foreign policy. We have, however, the consolation of remembering that though Persia may no longer be frightened, yet she may always be bought.





CHAPTER XXI.

A PERSIAN PRISON.

The Guard—The Gaoler—Prisoners' rations—Escapes—Gaol deliveries—The Khan—The chain-gang—The stocks—Condemned to death—Gaol dress.

THE Zanjir-khana (literally, "the House of Chains") in a Persian town is a place seldom visited by Europeans. The gaol is an apparently insecure structure having a mud wall about ten feet high. Half-a-dozen soldiers occupy the gateway; their unloaded muskets are piled in a corner. Three of the men are asleep under rugs. The other three, the guard on duty, are warming their hands over a small earthen pot full of live charcoal. Each man is provided with what is termed a shisht-per, a heavy bludgeon surmounted by an iron head having six projections: a simple weapon, but one with which you might stun an ox. The sentry salutes on seeing a European, and immediately seizes one of the rusty muskets. He calls to the gaoler, who is a hungry-looking man in a dirty cloth coat. We have come to see the gaol; and this man, the governor of the prison, has no objection; for he knows he will get a fee, and by fees he lives. Fees from the prisoners, fees from the friends of the prisoners, fees perhaps

from their enemies. We tell him it is our wish to explore the prison; at which the gaoler is very much surprised. "Go inside?" he says—"inside?" "Yes." We point out that the peep we have of the interior of the House of Chains does not satisfy us; for till now we have been merely looking through a square opening, which shows us a courtyard, on the sunny side of which are basking some five-and-thirty men, who look like villagers. "Bismillah! you are welcome; you Europeans are ever curious. Who wants to see the inside of a gaol? The outside is quite enough for most people." The gaoler indicates a narrow staircase; we ascend it, and find ourselves upon the roof of the rooms which form the four sides of the rectangular courtyard. A couple of small chambers are the quarters of the gaoler and his family. The female portion of it scuttle off: we take a seat at the open window, and begin conversation with our host, while he prepares for us the hubble-bubble, which must be offered to every visitor, and never refused. As we sit thus overlooking the courtyard, we observe that the ragged men who are enjoying the warmth of the sun have perceived us; they do not rise, or move in the least.

"Have you many prisoners?" "Yes, a good many; the harvest was bad, so we are busy." Our host tells us that his salary is but four tomans—about 30s.—a month, irregularly paid, and that times are bad. Any great criminal, any rich man, is usually incarcerated in the house of the governor or his farrash-bashi: the prisoners we see are merely rabble, men of nothing; there is no profit attached to them. They have their rations, but what is that? there is little

enough to be got out of the rations. "Two loaves a day ; why, if I tampered much with their accursed loaves, these sons of burnt fathers would rise and trample me to death. The fact is, I draw rations for sixty prisoners ; I have forty-five ; but what profit is there in thirty loaves a day ? Besides, I have to do the best I can. I have my perquisites." We ascertain that the perquisites consist of the clothes of the prisoners. But do these men surrender their clothes willingly ? We are told that they usually do ; but if they are obdurate they have to go into the *khelwut* (the private place). We express our desire to see the *khelwut*. "Certainly, on my eyes, if you wish it ! but there is nothing to see, absolutely nothing." At the question whether there are any female prisoners, our informant holds up his hands in horror. "Here, female prisoners ? When a woman in Persia misconducts herself, if imprisoned, she is simply detained in the house of a priest." "Where are the other prisoners, the ten we do not see ?" "In the *khelwut*." We learn that of the ten unfortunates two are determined prison-breakers, three are left for death, and the other five are simply new arrivals ; but they will join the bulk of the prisoners "when," as our informant puts it, "they have made me a present of their clothes." We inquire if there are many escapes. "No ; they occur seldom—very seldom ; and then only the rich—the liberal rich." We infer from this that in Persia a prisoner, if rich and willing to bribe, may escape. We point out that the guard is small, the walls not high, and the prisoners many. "To your feet !" shouts the gaoler. The five-and-thirty prisoners stand up, rising, however, slowly. We then see why

escapes seldom occur. Each man wears an iron collar, and this is linked to that of his neighbour by a heavy chain of bright iron. We notice, too, that every prisoner has a forked stick two feet long; with this, when sitting, he supports the weight of the chain.

As a rule there is a gaol delivery at each new year, and imprisonment for twelve months is regarded as a very severe sentence. The custom is that, except the great criminals, all the prisoners are liberated at the beginning of the new year, *if they have no property*, either with or without an application of the bastinado. A similar clearance takes place on each change of provincial governors. These occasions are much dreaded; for if the new governor wishes to make an example, then six, a dozen, or a score of prisoners may be executed at once. "Murderers only?" "Oh no; murderers, coiners, old offenders, highway robbers, sectaries of the Baab, burglars. Half the prisoners you see are ryots who can't, or won't, pay their taxes. They are not executed; but otherwise their treatment is the same: are they not yaghi (*i.e.*, in rebellion)?" Here a well-dressed man entered the room and sat down. "This gentleman, the Khan, is also a prisoner, but he boards with me: we have an arrangement." We note that the Khan wears no fetters and is well dressed. "I wear that at night, though," remarked the Khan, pointing to a huge block of wood with a hole in it to fit the ankle. "Of course, of course," remarked the gaoler, politely passing the hubble-bubble to his prisoner. We passed down into the courtyard and inspected the five-and-thirty men who composed the chain-gang. Each man had wrapped rags round

his iron collar to prevent its galling him. Some had leg-fetters: these, we were informed, were old offenders or notorious prison-breakers. The fetters were heavy; some sets weighing half a hundredweight, others much more. A large bare room, the only furniture of which were some heavy beams running down the middle, gave accommodation in the form of stocks for fifty prisoners. "We often place a foot or even both feet in this at night if a prisoner is refractory or condemned to death; but we don't use them habitually."

The khelwut was a low dark apartment, filthy in the extreme, the air almost poisonous with its ten inhabitants; and sometimes they were thirty. The three condemned men, ironed as were those outside, were sitting with both feet securely fixed in the kang (the Chinese have a similar word for a machine that restrains by its weight, but is fastened round the neck), or beam. They looked at us with a dull and hopeless gaze. "Murderers," our informant whispers: "it is for to-morrow." The two prison-breakers and the five unfortunates, who as yet had not parted with their clothes, were in a row, all secured in the same manner, but unironed. The place was pestilential, and alive with vermin. "Do many die in this place?" we inquired, as we hastened into the open air. A smack of the lips was the enigmatical reply. The dress of the prisoners was simply a coarse canvas shirt and drawers of ragged blue cotton cloth, with old and tattered cotton shoes; but every man had a great-coat and a skull-cap, both of felt. The great-coat also serves for bedding. Two loaves of bread are the only rations.

As we left the prison the gaoler said with a smile, "Ah, sahib! we are more humane than you are; there are no vindictive punishments here, no long sentences, no lifelong imprisonments; and you see our prisoners do no work—absolutely none."





CHAPTER XXII.

JUDICIAL PUNISHMENTS.

Opinion of the King's uncle—Punishments—Bastinado—Imprisonment—Fines—Maiming—Blinding—Death—Ordinary Executions—Extraordinary Executions—Dreadful punishments.

THE judicial punishments of Persia certainly seem very cruel; but the most enlightened rulers of the country insist that they are not vindictive: they are simply deterrent. The late Hissam-u-Sultaneh, uncle of the King, was one of the most severe of provincial governors; yet, as he himself triumphantly pointed out to me, he shed less blood, first and last, than his rivals, while the provinces under his government were remarkably free from crimes of violence. "I," he remarked, "take the great criminal red-handed; and I punish him in such a way that his punishment will not be forgotten and that his fate will be a terror to evil-doers. Unlike you Europeans, I don't shut the man up for years; I have no grudge; my punishments are policy. I commence my governorship by severe measures towards criminals, to let them know whom they have to deal with. It is true I then mercilessly execute some of them; but there are no more crimes of violence during my tenure of office, no more unsafe

roads, no burglaries. Murders—mostly unpremeditated murders—there certainly are, as there will be in all countries; I execute these men in a simple way. So do Europeans.” These are the ideas of a great Persian statesman. The result in Persia is undoubtedly what the Hissam stated: the province is quiet, criminals are afraid, honest men are safe.

The ordinary punishments are—the bastinado, fines, imprisonment (simple confinement), imprisonment in irons (the chain-gang), maiming, death.

The bastinado is administered upon the bare soles of the feet. Save by the King’s express order, it is never nowadays carried to a fatal issue; in twenty years I never heard of a fatal beating. The ordinary application of the bastinado means what we should term a “good hiding”—nothing more. In the eyes of a Persian there is nothing degrading in having “eaten stick.” Within the last ten years the Muschir-ul-Molk, the then wealthiest man in Fars (the richest province of Persia), was severely bastinadoed; he was over seventy years of age. The bastinado is usually administered to all small delinquents who are not fined. It is the punishment of peccadilloes. The accomplices of criminals are usually bastinadoed, to obtain confession. Criminals of the minor class are generally bastinadoed and discharged. The sticks used are not, as in Turkey, heavy bâtons, but sticks tapering to a point. The best criterion of the real value of a bastinadoing may be arrived at from the reply of a soldier who, when I asked him which he would prefer, an ordinary beating on his feet such as was being given to one of his fellows, or the loss of

a month's pay (7s. 6d.), answered "Why, the beating, of course." Criminals, when offered the choice of a fine or the bastinado, always choose the latter. It must be remembered that the lower classes in Persia walk much barefoot and that their feet are hard. Of course, to a European a bastinadoing would be a terrible punishment. Mirza Abdul Wahab Khan, late physician to H.R.H. Zil-es-Sultan, told me that he had seen 2,000 sticks fairly broken over the feet of a criminal—say 6,000 blows. This was done by the Shah's farrashes: the man survived.

Fines vary according to the position of the person fined, or the rapacity of the finer. Simple imprisonment is dealt out to those who are guilty of robbery or misdemeanour, or the greater crime of not paying their taxes. Imprisonment in a chain-gang, or imprisonment in irons, is reserved for crimes of violence, burglary, coining, or theft from the person. Maiming is resorted to for thieves from shops, cut-purses, and horse and cattle stealers. As a rule, a single joint of the finger is cut off for a first offence, the hand for a second; or the criminal is lamed by removing a portion of the *tendo Achillis*. Blinding of one or both eyes is now a rare punishment. Sometimes the ears are cut off, or the nose slit, and the criminal is led through the bazaar by the executioner. (It may be mentioned that at every execution the executioner levies, as a right a fee of a few coppers from each merchant and shopkeeper.) Amputation of the tongue has not occurred within my knowledge during the last twenty years. Strange to say, in such cases the sufferer gradually regains the power of intelligible

speech. The objection to surgical amputations in the East generally, and especially in Persia, arises from the terrible loss of caste to those who are maimed judicially.

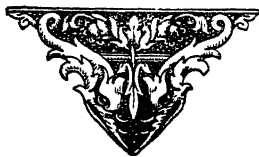
Death—painless and instantaneous—is usually inflicted by throat-cutting. The simple punishment of death is mostly carried out on murderers, robbers, and those guilty of crimes of violence, and on the sectaries of the Baab; it is also the penalty for high treason. In some cases men of high rank, condemned for the latter crime, are either poisoned or strangled. In my time, Zohrab Khan, who could not pay his revenue to the Crown and therefore revolted, had his throat cut in Shiraz. He had surrendered upon a sworn promise that his life would be spared; but the Muschir-ul-Molk, his personal enemy, was actually present, reading the order for his death, when Zohrab Khan was executed at the back of the Governor's palace. Within the last three years Houssein Kuli Khan, chief of the Bakhtiaris, was offered a cup of poisoned coffee when the guest of the Zil-es-Sultan; on his refusing it, two farrashes stepped forward and strangled him. The only crime of Houssein Kuli Khan, a noble and enlightened man, was that he was too powerful.

The exceptional punishments in Persia are blowing from guns or mortars, crucifixion, walling up or burying alive, burning alive, and in the few capital punishments of women (who are usually strangled, or wrapped up in a carpet and jumped upon, flung from a precipice or down a well). All these punishments have been inflicted within the author's knowledge. One poor fellow twice experienced the bitterness of

death. He was led out to be blown from a gun. A fellow-culprit had just been executed in this way before his eyes. The executioners prepared to lash him to the muzzle of the gun: but as he was a little man they had to get some bricks for him to stand on. When all was ready the priming was fired, but in the hurry the artillerymen had forgotten to load the gun. Though urgent representations were made to the Governor, he refused to spare the man; and the poor fellow was unbound, the gun was loaded, and the culprit blown away. The first part of this tragedy I myself witnessed. Crucifixion in Persia is done against a wall; the sufferers occasionally live many hours. The crime of one man so executed was that of having stolen the golden necklet of the Prince-Governor's horse: this was looked on as a sort of high treason. Some highway robbers who, among many other achievements, had looted and carried off the author (fortunately for him, he escaped from them), and murdered a Syud or holy man, were walled up alive near the scene of their crimes in hollow brick pillars. Eleven other highway robbers in one batch were thus buried alive in Shiraz in 1879; while a priest was burned to death in the public square of Shiraz, just before my arrival in Persia (he was an exceptionally atrocious criminal).

The dreadful punishments in use then among the Persians will be seen to be no legend. The argument of one of the most enlightened of the provincial governors for the continuance of these atrocities, *as deterrent*, has been given; but they are contrary to the wish of the Shah himself. The present King no

longer presides at executions in the capital, which was still the custom when he ascended the throne. All criminals condemned to death are usually retained in prison and respited from day to day till every farthing has been wrung from them, their friends, and relatives; and then they are executed. The King and the governors, too, often permit mysterious escapes, or exercise their prerogative of pardon on receiving a heavy bribe. At times great or powerful criminals are executed in prison and their bodies flung into the public square; or they are said to have died a natural death. To have been a great criminal is no bar to a man's advancement in Persia. One Rahim Khan, formerly a highway robber and once under sentence of death, was frequently Deputy-Governor of the province of Ispahan and farmer of the Customs of the whole of Southern Persia. The latter office he held till his death. He bribed freely.





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GREAT FAST OF RAMAZAN.

Fasting—Institution of the Great Fast—Duration—Strictness of the fast—Fast of the Ramazan—Water and opium—Zalābieh—Excitement at Sunset—The unco'guid—Charity.

RABELAIS tells us that the Mumbling Friars in the *Ile des Esclots* lived "on Fridays on nothing but sorb-apples (probably medlars); neither are these too ripe, so far as I could judge by their colour," and also that "on Fridays they tickle each other." Fasting is literally the total abstinence from food. Many and various are the fasts enjoined by the divers religions of the world. They vary in length, they vary in severity, they differ in the things to be abstained from. As a rule low churchmen do not fast; on the contrary, we have the authority of the bishop's butler, who, on being told that his master was about to entertain six clergymen, enquired if they were high or low. On being asked his reason for his apparent curiosity, he explained that the needful preparations were quite distinct: "For if they are High Church, my lord, they'll drink; if Low Church, they will eat." The severity of Lenten fasts is tempered by dispensations among Catholics. The Jews were in the habit of

“fasting until even” in the times of the Judges, while their kings and prophets frequently proclaimed a fast. We are directed to reverently prepare for fasting in the Sermon on the Mount, and we are warned against appearing to fast. Most of the Eastern Christians are very strict in their fasts, abstaining from flesh and even eggs, but they make up for it by using wine freely; their fasts are as a rule very long, exceeding the forty days of Lent, among some sects being a sixth of the entire year. Mahommed calls fasting “the gate of religion,” and it is reckoned among Mussulmans as “one-fourth of the faith.”

Ramazan, the sacred month of fasting among Mussulmans, was selected because in that month the Koran was vouchsafed to mortals. “The month of Ramazan shall ye fast, in which the Koran was sent down from Heaven” (Koran, chap. ii.). Dispensations among the Mahommedans cannot be purchased; all but travellers, the sick, the aged, young mothers and young children, must fast from daybreak until sunset. Daybreak is authoritatively defined in the Koran as the time in the early morning when by natural light a white thread can be just distinguished from a black one.

In a Mahommedan fast, no one *eats, drinks, or smokes* from daybreak till sunset. When the month falls in summer, these two latter ordinances are a terrible deprivation. To drink no water for a whole month during the hot day is a serious matter; and the artizan or labourer feels the deprivation in its full intensity. As the Mahommedan year is a lunar one, the month comes in all the different seasons, and will

commence again on the fourteenth of June thirty-three years hence. Many among the rich take a journey, so as to avoid the month of fasting; but they should by right make up for it by fasting a month at a subsequent time.

Among the Persians, the very religious actually add to their voluntary penance by fasting for several days prior to the commencement of Ramazan. Those who can afford to do so turn night into day, and by going to bed at dawn, and getting up late in the afternoon, they avoid the greater part of the suffering of the fast. An hour before daybreak watchers ascend the roofs and minarets, and shout, "Oh, ye faithful, now is the hour for water and opium!" A light breakfast is then hastily swallowed, and a farewell cup of tea and a pipe. Then most people take a deep draught of water, and the aged of both sexes gulp down a small pill of pure opium, and at the sound of the morning gun all who are not prevented by the nature of their avocations compose themselves to sleep. The labouring classes, generally at work at six, or even earlier, do not commence the toils of the day until seven during this month, and exhausted nature compels even them to take a noonday siesta, while all work ceases generally at three or four in the afternoon. All business is at a standstill. Most of the shops are shut altogether, or only opened for a few hours; the Government offices are closed save for an hour or two; and all serious business that can possibly be postponed is relegated till after Ramazan. As sunset approaches, the streets become thronged. The cook-shops, where the savoury kabābs are being prepared for the spit, or where slices of

mutton can be had cut from a sheep roasted whole, are surrounded by a hungry crowd. As the moment for the sunset gun-fire draws near, the itinerant pipe-seller places the moistened tobacco on the heads of his numerous hubble-bubbles, he fans his little charcoal fire up, and his customers grasp the desired pipe. There in the open bazaar may be seen the tea-seller with his portable urn : he infuses his detestable beverage (for the tea sold to the working classes is very bad and very weak). Bang goes the gun ; fire is placed on the water-pipes or hubble-bubbles ; the kabābs are almost scrambled for ; the sweetmeat-seller has a good business, and plates of hot zalābieh are speedily disposed of. This is a peculiar form of sweetmeat, or *pâtisserie*, sold only in Ramazan, and composed of a thin paste of starch and sugar kneaded with sesamum oil ; this paste or batter is poured in streams from a colander upon heated trays of burnished copper, and a kind of fritter is produced : it is delicately transparent and very delicious. Half-an-hour or an hour after sunset, a heavy meal is partaken of by all classes.

Ramazan is the month of entertainments among the Persians. Invitations are issued for guests to pass the night with their hosts ; they sit up till after midnight, and are again entertained at an early meal before dawn ; then every one lies down and sleeps as long as he can in the house of the entertainer. Story-tellers are much in request during this month of fasting, to beguile the weary hours of the night. During Ramazan these story-tellers drive a roaring trade. Poetry is recited and read aloud. Cheap story-books are much read ; they are roughly illustrated. I insert the following

paraphrase,* with a facsimile of the original rude woodcut, not from any ideas of its merit as such, but as illustrating Persian chap-books.

Mortaza Ali, the fourth successor and son-in-law of Mahommed, was assassinated by a fanatic, the Caliphate having been previously usurped by Omar and Abubekr (an old man who succeeded the Prophet on his death). So say the Shiah sect.

Abdul, a lazy peasant, lay
 A-snoring half the livelong day ;
 His thrifty wife to scold began—
 Arise, and work, O lazy man.”
 Yawning, he rose, and, stretching, spake,
 While half asleep and half awake,
 “ Ah, little wife, why should I rise ? ”
 “ To earn our bread, ’ the girl replies.
 “ Know, woman, if we work or not,
 In winter cold and summer hot,
 Great Allah feeds his slaves, and he
 Will surely feed both you and me.”
 The youthful peasant kissed his wife,
 Then sallied forth in dread of strife.
 With merry song and joyous lay,
 Abdul beguiled the dusty way.
 At length he reached a spreading plane,
 “ Beneath thy shade I will remain ;
 A brooklet and a shady tree,
 There is no better place for me.”
 He laid him down prepared to doze ;
 But suddenly he quickly rose,
 And clambering the plane in fear,
 Espied a dervish drawing near.
 The dervish had the dullard air,
 The maddened look, the vacant stare,

* From my larger work on Persia, *The Land of the Lion and Sun*, by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan.

That *bhāng** and contemplation give.
 He moved, but did not seem to live ;
 His gaze was savage and yet sad,
 What *we* should call stark-staring mad.
 All down his back his tangled hair
 Flowed wild, unkempt, his head was bare ;
 A leopard's skin was o'er him flung,
 Around his neck huge beads were hung,
 And in his hand—ah ! there's the rub—
 He carried a portentous club,
 Which Abdul's eye had caught, you see,
 And this is why he climbed the tree.
 The dervish stopped, and gazed around,
 Then flung himself upon the ground.
 "I ne'er have seen in God's creation
 A fitter spot for meditation."
 Smiled at the turf which 'neath him lay,
 And said, "Yes, here I'll spend the day."
 This Abdul heard, and shook with fear,
 While from his eye there fell a tear.
 "Oh, heaven !" exclaimed the trembling wight,
 "He may, perhaps, too, stop the night."

* * * *

The dervish, squatting in the shade,
 Five puppets small of clay has made,
 And to the first he spake : "To thee
 I give the name of Omar. See,
 The second's Alī Mortaza,
 The mighty Prophet's son-in-law.
 You, Abubekr, are the third"—
 Abdul craned out his neck and heard ;
 "The fourth the Prophet's self shall be"—
 Abdul here groaned, and shook the tree.
 The dervish paused, then gave a nod,
 "The fifth one—yes—the fifth one's God."
 Poor Abdul heard the blasphemy,
 And shook with fear and agony

* *Bhāng*, an intoxicating drug used by dervishes.

"Ah," quoth the dervish, "Omar; well,
 You doubtless grill in deepest hell;
 You robbed our Ali—I have smashed you;
 Had Ali pluck he might have thrashed you.
 Ali; could you do nought yourself to save
 From murder and an early grave?
 Ah! Islam's head too weak to rule,
 I fear you were a torpid fool—
 Half-hearted idiot—bah—pooh!"—
 He raised his club—"I smash you too.
 And you, old Abubekr—triple ass,
 Could you not aid him? I'll not pass
 You over,—there, take that!"



FACSIMILE OF RUDE PERSIAN WOODCUT.

And Abubekr got a spiteful pat.
 "While as for you;" the dervish cried—
 Here Abdul's ears were opened wide—
 "Oh, Prophet, you at least did *know*,
 Why didn't you avert the blow?
 In highest heaven you sat and saw;
 But didn't help your son-in-law."
 Down came the club with heavy thud,
 The Prophet was but flattened mud.
 The dervish turned him, bowing low,
 "Allah;" he cried, "from you I'll know
 Why *you* did nothing; like the rest,
 You were a lazy God at best.

When all mankind are in Thy hand
Why not despatch an angel band?
Or bid the earth to open wide
And swallow Omar in his pride?
What, silent too! ah, senseless clod!"—
The dervish raised his club to God.
Here Abdul screamed, and shouted, "Hold!
Ah, had you smashed *Him*—overbold
And brainless dervish—as before,
Chaos would come again once more."
The dervish heard—"Azraël!" * he cried,
Stared, and sunk back, and, shuddering, died,
And gave up his reluctant breath,
Thinking he heard the voice of Death.
Then cautious Abdul reached the ground,
Looked on the dervish, gazed around,
And softly to himself did cry,
" 'Tis certain there is no one by."
He searched the corpse, a purse appears,
And Abdul dries his frightened tears,
Hies to his smiling wife, says, "See!
From Allah, love, for you and me."
"Husband," quoth she, "God helps us all,
Both prince and beggar, great and small."
Abdul replied, "But, girl, you see
God would have perished but for me!"

The most severe trial is the great thirst and the abstention from smoking. Nearly all Persians are smokers. Among the merchant and tradesman class the mouthpiece of the kaliau or water-pipe is continually between the lips, and yet high and low bravely abstain. Kings and provincial governors are allowed to be exempt, but they seldom exercise the privilege. Other men, if they do in some cases break the fast, are obliged to do it in secret, and those who do so are

* Azraël, the angel of death.

usually freethinkers or sectaries of the Baab, a dangerous and fanatical crew of religious communists.

Those who are very particular, being mostly priests, holy men, and Syuds, or descendants of the Prophet, and the aged, are most careful not even to swallow their own saliva, lest they should thus unknowingly break the fast. When riding, or passing through a dusty place, these enthusiasts will tie a veil over their faces, lest they should swallow nourishment which might be floating in the air.

The fast commences when two credible witnesses have seen the new moon, and ends when two witnesses have observed the new moon of the following month. The witnesses must be males, and of middle age.

We have known cases where the very aged have declined to claim exemption, but have faithfully carried out the fast. Often, too, the sick prefer rather to die than break it.

There is certainly a passage in the Koran (chap. ii.) which says that "those who can keep it (the fast) and do not, must redeem their neglect by maintaining a poor man." But it is generally supposed by learned Mahommedans that the negative particle is understood here, as otherwise this sentence would contradict the context. During the month of Ramazan the Koran specially recommends the faithful "to be constantly in the mosques." This they carry out in letter, but not in spirit in Persia, for the poorer part of the population pass a great part of the day there certainly, *but in sleep*. One other exception exists: the Mahommedan who is in a foreign country, *i.e.*, not in *Islam*, is absolved from the necessity of fasting.

Who can despise a religion whose professors carry out the precepts of their law-giver so strictly as do most Mahommedans? Charity as well as fasting is inculcated upon Moslems. Certainly two-and-a-half per cent. of the entire income is given away in charity; often a fifth part is voluntarily surrendered; at times even a third. At the end of Ramazan every Mahomedan must give away for himself *and every member of his family* a measure of wheat, barley, dates, rice, or other common provisions. But this almsgiving is not merely a duty to the pious Mussulman: he looks on it as a privilege, and is certain of his reward in both this world and the next.





CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ANNUAL PERSIAN RELIGIOUS DRAMA.—THE TAZIYAH.

The month of Mohurrim—The theatre—The stage—The audience—The homily—The actors' procession—The martyrs—The characters—"Woe for Houssein!"—The drama—Comic interlude—Chorus of youths—Ali Akbar—The Katl.

MOHURRIM, the month of mourning, has arrived. Every one, down to the poorest, has gone into black. Even the women wear clothes of sombre hue, and the very religious appear in blue or black shirts. The Persians are a thrifty people, and most of them seize the opportunity to get an extra month's wear out of their old clothes, by having them dyed black in memory of the blessed martyrs Houssein and Hassan. Bands of boys earn a trifle by chanting a sort of hymn in praise of the sons of Ali. Over the doors of the mosques are seen little black banners. At the houses of many of the rich these little flags are exhibited. They signify to the passers-by that *rosah-khanah*, or public prayer-meetings and poem-readings, are being held within by priests and professional readers, at the expense of the master of the house, and to which all comers are welcome. These readings of pathetic poems

in honour of the martyrs are well attended, even the roofs of the neighbouring houses being thronged by both men and women, the latter, of course, veiled; and all are visibly and deeply affected. But the dramatic representations, which keep alive the affection of the Shiah Mahomedan for his saints, are generally given at the expense of the governor of the province. For a week an entire regiment of soldiers has been engaged in pitching the enormous tent in front of the palace of the Zil-es-Sultan at Ispahan, which is to protect audience and performers from sun and rain. Three masts, each over seventy feet high, sustain the vast tent, which is held in its place by ropes attached to trees and to stone columns purposely built into adjacent walls. Of course, several accidents have taken place: they take place every year. Three sides of the tent are open to the air, the fourth side is formed by the wall of the palace; the windows of five of the rooms look directly on to the arena, and thus form convenient private boxes. A huge platform, some thirty yards square, forms the stage; it has been carpeted, and stands some six feet above the ground. A mimbar, or native pulpit, ten feet high, is placed in the corner of the stage. The left half of the open space intended for the audience is carefully roped off into squares for the women, who take place according to the command of the Prince-governor, and in due precedence. This left half is exactly in front of the young Prince's box, and he will duly take advantage of this annual opportunity to scrutinize with his powerful opera-glass the countenances of all the beauties of the town; for in the excitement of the performance the veils of even the most timid are

raised, and after all, no one but the Prince will see their faces. We shall not, perhaps, be indiscreet if we say that the veils that are raised most frequently are those of the best-looking and more coquettish among the ladies. A space ten feet wide is left around the stage itself for the entrance and passage of the numerous processions of men, women, angels, devils, prophets, soldiers; in fact, all the thousand-and-one personages of a sensation drama, that lasts at least a week, sometimes fifteen days. As a rule there are two performances: a morning and an afternoon one, lasting about a couple of hours each. All is ready; the young Prince gives the order for the doors to be thrown open to the women, and himself takes his place at his window to enjoy the scene. In they pour, literally in thousands; the wealthier ladies merely send their servants to take and keep their places, just as the footmen used to do in bygone days at our theatres. Such a screaming and quarrelling; but the Prince's carpet-spreaders, hulking varlets, each armed with a big stick, good-naturedly get the ladies into their places. There they squat in rows, which are kept symmetrical by the ropes we have described; the rows of women forming a huge sea of dark blue, with their white opaque veils drawn tightly down over each face. There may be five or six thousand women present. And now another door is opened, and all the space to the right, and in front of, or behind the stage, is filled with a seething mob of men. These all stand; they soon pack tight as herrings in a barrel. It is with difficulty that the space around the stage is kept clear, but the vast gathering is orderly and good-humoured. The Prince's own people and his

friends now crowd to the windows. A cannon is fired in the square. And now commences the prologue. A little band of priests—not actors these—ascend the platform. One of them takes his place on the tall pulpit, the rest cluster round it, and some sit on the steps. There is a dead silence, only broken by the neigh of a distant horse or two, among the mounted crowd of performers in the distance. The clear voice of the moollah is plainly heard, “In the name of God the all-powerful, the merciful;” and then he commences a short homily on the death and sufferings of Houssein. At the very first utterance of the martyr’s name, every man and woman in the crowd repeats it with a sigh in a weird chorus. “Ah, Houssein! Woe for Houssein!” exclaims the moollah. The words are repeated by the crowd. “Houssein! Hassan!” shouts the priest, waving his arms. At the second syllable of each name, he strikes his bared breast, the entire male portion of the audience imitate him, and this exercise and chorus (for all shout “Houssein! Hassan!” in exact time) continues for a minute or two, while it must be remembered that every man strikes with all his force on the region of his heart. Lashed now to a frenzy of grief, the men beating their breasts, the women wailing, and many of them are also beating their breasts, the whole audience are ready for the day’s instalment of the tragedy. The priests leave the stage. The Prince’s band bursts into a cacophony wilder than any that a European could imagine. The din is fearful.

Now the procession of the persons of the drama advances. Preceding it are the water-carriers of the town, each man bearing his full water-skin, while one

man, the most stalwart of the fraternity, bearing an ox-skin of huge size, staggers along in front. Many are the remarks as the band of water-carriers advances. "Ah, what would our Houssein have given for one drop of water! Ah, woe for Houssein!"—for the principal portion of the martyr's sufferings was caused by thirst. Next comes a crowd of dervishes: each man carries a heavy double chain with which he scourges—and with a will, too—his naked back. Keeping time as they shout, "Houssein! Hassan!" at the second syllable of each word, down come the chains on the bruised flesh. Then follow (on one of the days only) a smaller but devoted band: these are the men who have vowed to shed their blood in honour of the martyr. Each man (as did the martyr when he went out to die at the sword's point) wears a shroud of white cotton, which throws up in cruel ghastliness his strange occupation. With the drawn sword they carry in their hands, these men hack their own foreheads; the blood flows in streams on to the white shrouds; some even faint from exhaustion, and the group of bleeding fanatics excites the crowd to pity and compassion. Veritable priests of Baal these! All this time the music plays, the trumpets sound, the drums beat, and the entire audience of, say at a minimum, ten thousand persons, shout "Houssein! Hassan!" and beat their breasts in time. Now the actors advance. The wild infidel Arabs in their short dresses and naked limbs, armed with swords and spears only, and on foot. Yezed, the infidel king; Shemr, his court and myrmidons: Shemr, the actual murderer of the blessed Houssein clad in helmet and chain-armour, and bran-

dishing his drawn sword, bestrides one of the governor's favourite horses (all the speaking characters are mounted). As Shemr passes, the men curse, the women spit at him, so excited are they. The Angel Gabriel, the messenger of God, next ambles along: he is merely a bearded man, hooded, veiled, and gloved. For in Persia angels, prophets, saints, and women in the drama are merely seen as veiled figures. Then come more horses with the minor characters upon them; then led horses; then a mob of soldiers; then more characters on horseback; then another band of so-called music, playing vigorously. Then, camels carrying panniers containing the wives, daughters and grand children of the martyr. Then, on a very fine horse, Kasim, the youthful son of Houssein; as he passes the audience weep and audibly lament his coming death. Next comes Hassan, the martyr's brother. Then there is a trumpet sounded, and last of all, on a priceless steed, comes the principal tragedian, clad in dark green turban and green flowing robes (this colour is sacred to the Prophet and his descendants). As he appears, the audience all beat on their breasts. He waves his drawn scimitar. "Houssein," they scream with a wild yell of welcome. "Oh, Houssein! Woe for Houssein!" they shout, and at the second syllable of the name, every breast is struck with savage fervour. The whole procession thrice marches round the stage, amidst shouts, yells, and cries of sympathy and woe, and the audience being now lashed up to the proper pitch of enthusiasm, all the thousands present are excited to a frenzy of tears. All, clad in the deepest mourning, are crowded in a weeping mass, to behold

the many acts and interludes of the sacred drama or mystery. We are now concerned, not with the audience, but with the drama itself and the actors in it.

Probably the Taziyah is the most ambitious play ever acted, for it pretends to represent many of the events of sacred history, such as the episodes of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the sacrifice of Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael. These are but the prologue, the minor chain of events all leading up to the grand climax, the death of Houssein, his companions and family. The author or authors of the drama are unknown. The story is too much matter of history to need detailing here. Shortly we may say, that, after the first few performances, devoted to the episodes we have noted, we are introduced to the little band of the martyr and his family, and to the tyrant Yezeed, and his general, the valiant but misguided Shemr.

The drama is played without any attempt at scenery, but the Persians are very realistic in the matter of properties. Captives wear their chains, or else wooden yokes which indicate their unfortunate position. The wedding of the hapless youth, Kazim, is celebrated with due pomp. The various combats are carried out with ingenious realism. Armies of supernumeraries represent the infidel Arabs, and the soldiers of Yezeed. Camels bear the wives, sisters, and children of the martyr, and his tent is duly pitched upon the platform thirty yards square which forms the stage. Some of the interludes, very few, are sufficiently comic: among these may be noted the illness of Yezeed. The tyrant having despatched his general Shemr, is indisposed. His spirits are low. He sends for his physician; the doctor

prescribes various abominations for his benefit; the ordinances of the medico are carried out. Yezeed, who is treated for colic, becomes worse, and he orders his physician to instant execution. "Ah!" cries the king, "it is not all this that can cure me, but the sight of the head of Houssein"; as he speaks, the cruel Shemr enters with the much-desired head on a spear. Yezeed springs to his feet, and after saluting the gory trophy in a speech of some length, declares his perfect cure by the sight of it. As the drama continues, and more and more victims are sacrificed, the heads become quite a feature in the processions which takes place round the stage at the conclusion of each scene, or interlude. And the gory trophies are fairly well made, each one being recognizable as the particular head for which it is intended. The actors are not mere amateurs: they have been engaged in the business from childhood, and the traditions of the national drama have been handed down to them from their fathers who played it before them. As children, mere infants, they will have been borne in the processions as the babes of Houssein; the little boy (for there are no female actors) with the clear child's treble, who plays the tender Rockiayah in a year or two will represent the beardless Kazim; then other and more serious parts will be entrusted to him; and at last he will be able to sustain the arduous rôles of Shemr, Yezeed, Gabriel, and even Houssein himself. Of course, many of the parts are doubled. Few of the actors are utterly bad, but among the least efficient it is the custom to carry a copy of the part in the palm of the hand, of the help of which the performer does not scruple to avail himself should memory fail him. And

in a drama that would fill a large folio volume, that lasts, say, fifteen days, that is only played once a year, and above all where the prompter is unknown, this simple custom has its advantages. The action never flags. Every entry and exit, every stage direction, is regulated with great exactitude. The delivery of the speeches, which are all written in poetry, is generally good; some among the actors distinguish themselves. Naturally, the "tyrants," such as Shemr and Yezed, offer the most scope for declamation, and the description by Shemr of the death of Houssein and his own subsequent remorse is touching. When acquainted with the language, and the pitiful story of the play, it is almost impossible to avoid being carried away by excitement, for it becomes contagious.

As to the actual play. The day's performance has commenced by the procession which passes three times round the huge stage; all the characters are mounted on horses of price clad in their finest trappings; two bands discourse sonorous discord, irrespective of each other. Some twenty youths, volunteers from among the sons of small shopkeepers, now take their place in a semicircle upon the stage. They sing in clear falsetto voices, unaccompanied, but to a plaintive tune, a sort of hymn in praise of Nussir-u-deen Shah, his family, and that culminating star of the Kajar dynasty, his son the Zil-es-Sultan, the present governor of "thrice-happy Ispahan."—The Prince himself smiles blandly from his box, and directs a present of money to be bestowed on them. And now the stage is cleared. Ali Akbar is about to be martyred. He appears full of life and warlike vigour: he wears a shirt of mail: no property dress

this, but a real "Daoudean" shirt, each link of which is riveted; on his head is the round steel casque of the Eastern warrior; he is booted to the knee; he carries a circular shield. He now harangues the audience, and his enemies, who arrive in throngs. Shemr, the ferocious Shemr, replies: they dare each other to the combat. Shemr is soon brought to his knees, but the crowd of soldiers of Yezeed rescue him just as the victorious Ali Akbar is preparing with many words to despatch him. They surround Ali Akbar, who performs prodigies of valour, defeating some thirty assailants. These flee. Ali Akbar, out of breath, and leaning on his trusty scimitar, harangues the audience; he is evidently wounded. Houssein appears; he and Ali Akbar rush into each other's arms; they make long speeches descriptive of their terrible position. The women and children arrive, weeping and wringing their hands. Ali Akbar bids them all farewell; he takes a tiny baby from its veiled mother's arms and kisses it. (Loud shrieks and wailings from the female side of the audience.) He tells them all that he is about to die. In sign of grief all the women and children upon the stage throw handfuls of cut straw over their heads, to express their woe (the cut straw is typical of dust and ashes). Then all retire, except Houssein and Ali Akbar. "Ah! my master, let me receive from your dear hands a shroud in which I may go to meet my certain death." The request of Ali Akbar is complied with. As he dons the yard of white linen that typifies the shroud that the Eastern warrior at times puts on to show that he does not ask or expect quarter, and means to die, the drums roll, the trumpets sound, men and women beat

their breasts. "Ah! Ah! Woe! Woe for Ali Akbar!" they cry. Houssein departs. The soldiers of Yezeed reappear: some fifty men. Ali Akbar harangues, and then rushes on them; they discharge imaginary arrows from their bows; there is a general mêlée, many of the soldiers fall before the sword of Ali Akbar. Here the hero rolls off the stage only to reappear with innumerable arrows fixed to his garments. The white shroud is now dabbled in blood. We observe that the saint has now but one arm; he totters forward; he delivers a short harangue in a broken voice; he defies his assailants, who are huddled together irresolute in a corner of the stage; they advance, he attacks them, slaying several as usual; he exits, shouting "Houssein, oh, Houssein!" And now happens (to us) a sufficiently ludicrous incident: he reappears *armless*, his sword *in his mouth*. He fights a single combat, and slays his assailant; then the crowd of myrmidons reappear; they get him down, they crowd round him; his head is cut off and placed on a pole, and the body of the dead Ali Akbar is seen lying armless and headless in its bloody shroud. The band strikes up. The performers with the body of Ali Akbar make their promenade round the stage—the audience shout, "Oh, Houssein! Oh, Ali Akbar!" All weep and beat their breasts. The play is over for the day.

On the day of the death of Houssein, the "katl" or massacre, the place is more than ever thronged. The scene of the death is managed in much the same way as that of Ali Akbar. To us they may seem puerile, these simple plays, but they excite the emotions of the Persians very powerfully. Not a dry eye is seen, bared

breasts are black and blue with self-inflicted blows. And on seeing the Taziyah, the Persian remembers that he is a Shiah, and curses his saints' murderers the Sunnis. In a country where there is no other stage-play seen, save this yearly one, considerable and perhaps exaggerated importance is given to it. When seen for the first time by a European, he notices many things that are ludicrous. After a while, and when he is familiar with the people and the language, he is not ashamed to confess that he, too, at times may shed a tear for the unforgotten martyrs of a false religion.





CHAPTER XXV.

THE TAZIYAH, OR COMIC DRAMA, OF OMAR (THE PERSIAN GUY FAWKES).

Omar—Futteh-Ali Shah—A poor prince's entertainment—Persian ladies—A virago—A catastrophe—Fireworks.

THE large majority of the Mussulmans of Persia belong to the Shiah sect; they specially reverence Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Mahommed, and they look upon Omar and Abu Bekr as usurpers. Upon the head of Omar, especially, they never tire of pouring insult and curses. Even the children at school, in asking for temporary permission to absent themselves, do so in the time-honoured form, "Cursed be Omar!" Consequently, Omar in Persian eyes is the type of all that is abominable, vile, and monstrous. Just as the great drama of the taziyah is yearly played with all its magnificent accessories and touching episodes in honour of Houssein and Hassan, the martyrs of the Shiah sect, so is a yearly farce performed, either openly or in secret, called the Taziyah of Omar, in ridicule of Omar: of Omar, the wise successor of the Prophet, the revered saint of the Sunnis, who form the great bulk of the Mahommedan population of the world. This taziyah

of Omar is invariably followed by the burning in effigy of this object of the hatred of the Shiah sect.

The author was invited one day in Shiraz to be present at the taziyah of Omar; which was to be followed by a dinner, the whole to conclude with an Omar-koshūn, or killing of Omar; a quasi-solemn ceremony, observed from times of old among the Shiah Mahomedans, and very similar to our treatment of Guy Fawkes. The house where the taziyah was to be celebrated was reached about five in the cool of the afternoon. It was a poor place enough, and was the home of one of the numerous penniless princes of Shiraz, a grandson of Futteh-Ali Shah, an enlightened monarch of Persia, who reigned from 1797 to 1834. Futteh-Ali Shah, during his long reign of thirty-seven years, was celebrated for two remarkable achievements: he grew the longest and finest beard in Persia—a notable thing in a country where long and fine beards are the rule; and he had a grown-up family of seventy-two. Strange to say, this large family all resembled their father. In Persia, all the sons of a King's sons are princes; and the sons of princes are princes too. From this it will be seen, that princes in Persia are very plentiful; and as Persian princes are extravagant, in the third generation they are usually poor. The prince at whose house the entertainment was given enjoyed a nominal pension of sixty pounds a year. This was very irregularly paid; and when paid was subject to large deductions. As to property, the poor fellow had none, save his horse, his gun, and the clothes he stood up in. Of course, he was married to a wife as poor and as noble as himself. Happily for

the prince, the Persians are hospitable; he and his wife were popular; they were always welcome guests. A prince at a dinner-table is an acquisition; still, if one dines out three hundred and sixty-four days in the year, a return of some sort must be made, even in Persia. So the poor prince had asked a houseful of people to dinner, and to behold the time-honoured killing of the Persian Guy Fawkes. All the buffoons in laughter-loving Shiraz were collected in the well-sprinkled courtyard of the poor prince. Over the hauz or tank which is seen in every decent house in Persia stood a platform, some four feet high. Ten Jews were making a tremendous din, with a dulcimer, two drums, two tambourines, two viols, and a lute. Before each group of buffoons, or Jews, was a bottle of spirits or wine, and a brass drinking-cup. The rooms of the house that looked upon the courtyard were crowded with Persian ladies nominally veiled, but as everybody seemed to know everybody else, and as the poor princesses of Persia, at all events in their youth, are not chary of the exhibition of their charms, a very good idea could be formed of a certain type of Oriental beauty. Honestly, nine-tenths of these women were painted hags; not that the use of fards in the East conveys any idea of impropriety; it is the custom to paint, and to paint thickly. Among the faces, however, were some of decided pretensions to good looks, and naturally the owners of these were the least coy. But all this galaxy of forbidden fruit had to be taken in at a glance; for the poor prince, handing us a rose, ushered us into chairs, previously sent for from our own quarters. A hubble-bubble was handed to us, and the

host hastened to welcome more arrivals. Of course, we were seated in the open air, with some four hundred other male guests: the heat even there was excessive; that which the poor ladies must have endured in the stuffy rooms must have been indeed oppressive.

But the performances have commenced. A *lūti* (professional buffoon) attired as a burlesque of a *moollah*, or priest, ascends the stage. He solemnly curses Omar; he takes off the peculiar habits of the Mahommedan priest amid shouts of laughter: he tells his beads (for the rosary is used by Mahommedans as well as Christians); he preaches a comic sermon. The music strikes up again, and the procession of actors makes its circuit around the crowded courtyard, Omar himself leading a dog, the type of defilement. And such a dog: one of the street pariah, which, unused to the leash, howls dismally and tries to bite! Then come his followers, all riding on asses. Then, angels and demons; last of all the *Sheitan*, or "Old Nick" himself: a gruesome devil with horns, nude to the waist, painted in black spots, and yellow face, and white round eyes and mouth. The climax is to be the descent of Omar and the *Sheitan* to regions below. All ascend the platform. Omar makes a speech; he dines; at the suggestion of the devil he gets very drunk; the fun grows fast and furious. Omar dances; his attendants, angels, demons, buffoons, all dance. And now came a sudden and unexpected finale. We have noted that the temporary stage was over a tank of water. Crash—in an instant Omar and his crew, Jews, *lūtis*, dog, and devil, are all precipitated into the tank. The platform, an old and rotten one, went into minute splinters. The audience

rose as one man; the struggling mob buffeted each other in their efforts to get out; the water stirred up in the hauz, which had probably not been cleaned for years, became green in an instant, and the whole troupe of unfortunates seemed to be fighting in a bath of ink. The lütis dragged the wretched Jews in, as they attempted to scramble out, and ducked them; the fetid muddy water is flung about on all sides. The audience scream with laughter. The poor prince and his male relatives, having already had quite as much wine as is good for them, shout and encourage the buffoons.

But now, above the yells of laughter of the onlookers and the screams of the unfortunate Jews, arises a wail, and shrill shrieks of rage and anger. The hapless wives and daughters of the descendants of Futteh-Ali Shah suddenly realize that their best garments, that they have freely lent to the lütis to "dress up" in, are utterly ruined. Great is the dismay of the unhappy ladies; one gigantic woman in amber satin skirt and rose-coloured headgear addresses the audience in her rage as "Dogs, and sons of burnt fathers!" but, alas! the only answer is peals of unextinguishable laughter; and, as our host, in a semi-maudlin state, helplessly waves his arms over the struggling mass in the tank—for as fast as one tries to get out, the rest pull him back—"Get in, then, thyself!" is the exclamation of the enraged princess, as she stretches out her muscular and bejewelled arm, and her husband, our unhappy host, joins with a splash the strugglers in the inky pool, which is up to their breasts. No one waited for the dinner. As the hauz was deserted, all the guests hurriedly departed, laughing till they cried. The huge

figure of Omar, the Persian Guy Fawkes, covered with fireworks, smiled down benignantly from the roof, but no one stayed to see him burnt.

Whether the giving way of the tank was a pre-arranged "lark" of the giver of the entertainment, or merely a plan to save a dinner, was never known; or whether, as is more likely, the numerous Sunnis disapproving of the whole proceeding had artfully sawn the planks, was never ascertained; the author is inclined to think that it was simply an accident, and the collapse of a rotten platform. Whatever was the cause, it occurred at the right moment, and was really too comic to have been prearranged. Anyhow, the Shiraz ladies were from that day very disinclined to lend their clothes, and never again did the writer have the opportunity of being present at the taziyah of Omar; though the Omar-koshūn (or killing of Omar) takes place in thousands of Persian homes, and is celebrated by the burning of the Persian Guy Fawkes and the discharge of innumerable fireworks, in the construction of which the Persians are very ingenious. The fireworks are plain and uncoloured, it is true, but the effects of their elaborate set-pieces, rockets, &c., is very surprising and grand in the extreme. No dinner, wedding, or festivity is complete without fireworks, and the barūd-khūb, or gunpowder-pounder, *i.e.* pyrotechnist, drives a roaring trade.



CHAPTER XXVI.

IN A BAZAAR.

Definition—Competition—Shopkeepers—Shops—Bazaar-dogs—
Night-time—Scene in the bazaar—A criminal—Closing the
bazaar—Ferocious dogs.

THE European idea of a bazaar is a large hall filled with small stalls, where useless articles are sold to foolish women and children at fabulous prices. A bazaar in the East is merely a narrow covered street with shops on either side. This covering is very needful, for it keeps off the hot summer sun, and protects the passers-by from the rains and snows of winter : for in Persia umbrellas are never used, save by the great, and then only as sunshades. The roadway, too, if trampled earth can be called a roadway, is kept dry in winter, and, being sprinkled, free from dust in summer. Portions of an Eastern bazaar are at times very magnificent, and the brick bazaars in Teheran and Shiraz are lofty and well built, from the ground to the high-arched roof being at times sixty feet. But this is the exception rather than the rule ; generally the arched roof of burnt or sun-dried bricks springs from the top of the low open stalls. From the principal

bazaars open the large caravanserais, where the merchants and wholesale dealers have their offices. Some of these caravanserais are fine specimens of architecture. All are well suited to their purpose: a lodging-place for the merchants and their animals, and stores for the secure housing of their goods.

A curious but sensible custom in the East is that each trade should have its separate bazaar. Thus the shoemakers' shops are all situated in the one arcade, the smiths' in another, the cloth-sellers' in a third; while the situation of the copper-smiths' bazaar can be discovered from afar, so great is the din of the busy hammers on the resounding copper vessels that they are fashioning. This plan of aggregating the separate trades has great advantages to the purchaser, for the tradesmen are subjected to healthy competition, and the Oriental does not go in and buy, but he asks the price first, at each shop or stall. It has also an advantage to the seller of good wares, for each centre of trade becomes a sort of competitive exhibition, and the expositor of the finest goods has the best custom. This system of aggregation only refers to certain trades. All the dukkans (shops or stalls) are much the same in appearance, they vary only in size. A brick platform, a yard high, runs along in front of the arched opening of each shop. This platform is some four feet wide, behind it is the shop itself, simply an archway of more or less depth; it is unglazed; the walls of its interior are generally whitewashed or gaily painted. It is fitted with rough shutters which effectually close the opening at night. In the middle of the little platform sits the shopkeeper; on either side of him are piled his wares.

He makes a great show, and is an expert in the art of "window-dressing," though here there is no window to dress. Behind each shop is a strong-room; in this room, generally pitch-dark, the shopkeeper keeps the more valuable portion of his goods. Winter and summer he squats in the centre of his store, a hubble-bubble is usually in his mouth; in the event of a bargain with the customer or the arrival of an acquaintance, this water-pipe is offered to the client, and usually accepted. In winter time, besides being warmly clad and wrapped in a fur cloak from Afghanistan, or one of the native sheep-skin jackets, the shopkeeper usually has a small brazier of live charcoal in front of him; at this he warms his hands, from this he supplies the fire for his eternal pipe. Gossip goes on all day long in the bazaar; failing a customer, the shopkeeper chats with his neighbours and rivals, or even with the passers-by, and much good-humoured chaff is expended. Every shopkeeper has his apprentice, whom he feeds and teaches his trade to; generally he is a relation, for in Persia many families keep to a particular trade.

The tajirs, or merchants, dwell in the caravanserais adjoining the bazaar; the shopkeepers, handicraftsmen and retailers, in the bazaar itself; but by day only. Much haggling and bargaining is seen. A shopkeeper has several prices, and marking up a price is unknown. One good rule is in force in every bazaar: money is always returned in full without reluctance, within twenty-four hours, if the customer is dissatisfied. Much taste is shown in decorating the shops; bunches of flowers are seen everywhere; large pans of iced water are placed in each shop-front, and the passers-by are

expected to help themselves. Parrots, nightingales, and talking larks are frequently seen hanging in cages, not for sale, but the pets of the shopkeepers. At seven A.M. (earlier in summer) the shops are opened. At sunset (earlier in winter) they are compulsorily closed. Half-an-hour after this the bazaar itself is often entirely shut up by the closing of huge gates, and is uninhabited, save by the dogs and watchmen. All the bazaars are quite unlighted at night, and the fury of the local pariah dogs, who inhabit it and live on the garbage, is very noticeable as one rides through, the servants carrying lighted lanterns. These dogs are to a certain extent fed by the shopkeepers: all day they sleep and are quite silent, at night they are noisy and fierce in the extreme.

The bazaar of the goldsmiths and silversmiths is, of course, the great attraction to the stranger. The brilliant stock in trade is freely exposed, and all is pure gold and pure silver. Many curious antique objects in gold and silver, also ancient coins, can be picked up at the bankers and money-changers; these are saved from the melting-pot, in the hope of being sold above the intrinsic value. Forgeries of ancient coins are frequent: they all come from Hamadan, the ancient Ecbatana. The coins of the Sassanian monarchs of Persia are so common, being constantly discovered by digging in ruins, &c., as to be only worth a trifle more than the weight of the silver.

Pipe-heads, covered with gems or enamels, in gold and silver, tea and coffee pots, bracelets, necklaces, and house furniture, in the precious metals, form the principal objects seen in the shops of the goldsmiths. As

to the gems, they are mostly flawed or drilled ; really valuable stones are, as a rule, kept in the pockets of their owners. Native gunsmiths, workers in metal, in wood, and in leather, make a brave display. Crowds surround the shops of the baker and the kabāb-seller. The fruiterer has a grand show of melons, pomegranates, and the fruits of the season, mixed with piles of fresh vegetables, and huge bunches of flowers. In the narrow way, from six to ten feet wide, pass strings of laden camels, mules and their burdens, horsemen and foot-passengers, the bazaar is always crowded. There is a great noise of bargaining and chatting, rough wit is prevalent, but every one is good-humoured, and the traders are brisk and anxious for business. The grocers and sellers of dye-stuffs, and the apothecaries, exhibit their wares in tempting piles ; a good many articles are decorated with pieces of gold leaf to make them attractive : notably the carcasses of the sheep in the shops of the butchers. The carpet-sellers sit among piles of their attractive wares ; while up and down pass the peripatetic vendors of old clothes, second-hand weapons and jewellery ; wandering hucksters of the poorer class brandish something they want to dispose of, and the less valuable the commodity the louder they shout. And now a man in a long red coat is seen leading a criminal by a string through his nose ; two burly police-officers attend him : this is the executioner. The man he is leading is a thief whose hand he has just chopped off. The executioner's assistants collect for him from each shopkeeper a few halfpence, *as a right*. The tea-seller and the pipe-seller lounge by, vaunting the goodness of their wares ; dervishes in eccentric garments

pass along, asking for alms, and crowds of professional beggars with the professional whine. (In Persia begging is a recognized occupation.) Veiled women chatter and whisper, thronging the roadway and the shop-fronts. The governor of the town, or some local magnate, rides through with his attendants, and all the shopkeepers rise to their feet and salaam. Suddenly a shout is heard—it is the crier: “Pack up and close;” “Pack up and close!” The rumbling of drums is heard; all set to in earnest; the stores of goods exposed are removed to the interior of the dukkans, the rough shutters are put up, and a huge padlock of native or Russian manufacture is affixed. In half-an-hour the bazaars are empty and untenanted, save by the few night-watchmen and the pariah dogs. These latter race up and down in hostile and barking droves. It is not uncommon for these dogs to worry each other to death; the victor and his friends then sup upon the vanquished, and entirely consume him.





CHAPTER XXVII.

THE JEWS IN PERSIA.

The Guebres—The Christians—Farming the Jews—Their ill-treatment—Number of Jews—Jewish trades—Jedeeds—Jewish Shrines—Tomb of Esther—Burial grounds.

THE policy of the Persian Government towards its non-Mussulman subjects is tolerant. The Guebres (fire-worshippers) from their number (8,000), and their being mostly congregated at Yezd, are in no way persecuted. They are allowed to pursue commercial occupations, and have a high character for integrity. The Christians, Armenian or Nestorian, are either directly or indirectly under Russian protection, and fully avail themselves of it; while the converts of the American and English Protestant missionaries, all originally Armenians or Nestorians, are quite safe under missionary rule.

But the position of the Jews is a very painful one. They are under no protection. They are merely the perquisite of some subordinate officer of the local governor. The principle is very simple. The Jews of a province are assessed at a tax of a certain amount. Some one pays this amount to the local governor, together with a bribe; and the wretched Jews are

immediately placed under his authority for the financial year. It is a simple speculation. If times are good, the farmer of the Jews makes a good profit; if they are bad, he gains nothing, or may fail to extract from them as much as he has paid out of pocket—in that case, woe betide them! During the Persian famine the Jews suffered great straits before the receipt of the subsidies sent from Europe by their co-religionists. The farmer of the Jewish colony in a great Persian city (of course a Persian Mahommedan) having seized their goods and clothes, proceeded, in the cold of a Persian winter, to remove the doors and windows of their hovels and to wantonly burn them. The farmer was losing money, and sought thus to enforce what he considered his rights. No Persian pitied the unfortunates; they were Jews, and so beyond the pale of pity.

Every street-boy raises his hand against the wretched Hebrew; he is beaten and buffeted in the streets, spat upon in the bazaar. The only person he can appeal to is the farmer of the Jews. From him he will obtain a certain amount of protection if he be actually robbed of money or goods; not from the farmer's sense of justice, but because the complainant, were his wrong unredressed, might be unable to pay his share of the tax. At every public festival—even at the royal salaam, before the King's face—the Jews are collected, and a number of them are flung into the hauz or tank, that King and mob may be amused by seeing them crawl out half-drowned and covered with mud. The same kindly ceremony is witnessed whenever a provincial governor holds high festival: there are fireworks and Jews. At every arrival

of a new provincial governor, the Jews are compelled to sacrifice an ox in his honour upon the high road at some distance from the town. The head-man of the Hebrew community has to run with the bleeding head of the animal, imploring the governor's countenance and protection, until he is beaten off by the farrashes. No child is missing for a few hours but the Jews are accused of stealing it for sacrifice; and on such occasions they are shamefully beaten and robbed. No respect is paid to their wives and daughters. They are compelled to live in a "Ghetto," crowded together, where the houses resemble the dens of animals rather than the habitations of men. When a Jew marries, a rabble of the Mahomedan ruffians of the town invite themselves to the ceremony, and, after a scene of riot and intoxication, not unfrequently beat their host and his relations and insult the women of the community; only leaving the Jewish quarter when they have slept off the drink they have swallowed at their unwilling host's expense. Huddled together as they are, and living on the poorest food, is it to be wondered at that the Jews of Persia are a pale and sickly race? The wonder rather is that they exist at all.

There are supposed to be 19,000 Jews in Persia. There is a hahembashi, or priest, to each large community: as a rule this man alone, of all the Jews, is not persecuted by the Persians, though he is subject to ill-treatment in the bazaars. Education is absolutely denied to the Jews. Of course, from their religion, the numerous colleges of Persia are closed to them, as are the ordinary schools. Even the school of the Church Missionary Society in Julfa is to them unavailable; for

they would not dare to send their children there any more than would the Mahommedans. Converts to Mahommedanism from the Persian Jews are very few. Generally they are women or girls who have been decoyed from their homes, or married to Mussulmans under threats of violence. Such conversion is of little worth; but the fear of death* would even after such a conversion prevent a relapse. The children of these marriages are termed *Jedeeds*. They are not looked down on by the Persians, but rather favoured than otherwise.

The trades open to the Jews are, brokerage, working in the precious metals, in which they are very expert; dealing in precious stones, peddling, the selling of leeches, for which there is a great demand; the making and sale on their premises of wine and arrack; music, singing, and dancing (three professions only practised for hire in the East by the lowest of the low); the manufacture of spurious ancient coins; the practice of midwifery by the women; and the cleaning of drains, cesspools, etc., by the men (for when any unclean or filthy job is to be done, Jews are sent for to do it).

With all the disadvantages that they labour under in Persia, the Jews are fairly honourable. A Jew will never take a false oath. A few of them can read and write, and some possess a knowledge of Hebrew. Like the rest of their nation all over the world, they are very intelligent. Even in Persia a stupid Jew does not exist; they may be ignorant, but that is their misfortune.

* By Mahommedan law a convert to Moslemism who relapses is executed.

It may be asked, why do not the Jews leave this veritable house of bondage? Because they are not permitted, save as a special favour, even to leave the district they are settled in. One favour they do enjoy in Persia: they are not compelled to serve in the army.

The Jews of Persia are in the habit of making pilgrimages to the tombs of Esther and Mordecai, who lie in a poor little shrine near Hamadan. These tombs are covered each by a wooden ark, on which are stuck small pieces of paper like labels, covered with Hebrew characters. They are placed there by the Hebrew pilgrims. There is nothing to attract the cupidity of the Persians here. There are the graves and the wooden arks, under a small dome some fifty feet high. The building is of red bricks, the walls much patched with mud; the blue dome is of tiles. The Jewish burial-ground at Shiraz is a large and ancient graveyard; there are no mounds, no tombs or monuments. A few very small flat stones covered with Hebrew characters mark the resting-places of generations of oppressed Jews. The graveyard remains undefiled, for it is hidden by grass and weeds. The Christians of Shiraz lately placed a high wall round their burial-ground, which is adjacent. The natural result in a Mahommedan country followed: the graves were desecrated, and the tombstones displaced and broken.

We have now said enough to show that the lot of the Jew in Persia is a most unhappy one. We commend his condition to his European co-religionists, those noble men who came to his relief in the famine time.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE POPPY AND OPIUM-MAKING.

Cultivation of the poppy—Harvest of opium—Adulteration—
Manufacture—Opium-eating—Opium-smoking—Modakel—
Effects of opium culture.

FROM time immemorial opium has been grown in Persia in the neighbourhood of Yezd, and enough was always produced there to supply the demands of the native market. Nine out of ten of the aged in Persia take from one to five grains of the drug daily; it is largely used by the native physicians, and a considerable export was kept up viâ Meshed to Central Asia; the crop was considerable. During the cotton famine caused by the American War, the attention of the Persian ryot was turned to the cultivation of the cotton-bush; but Persian cotton soon became hardly worth growing, save the small amount required for home manufacture, and the villagers throughout the centre and south gradually turned their attention to the cultivation of the poppy. Year by year this crop has become a more favourite one; and the result has been that grain-growing has been much neglected, with the effect of raising the price in some districts. In the neighbourhood of Ispahan, as far as the eye can

reach, nothing but fields of poppies are to be seen, with a small patch here and there of wheat or barley, which the cultivator produces for his own use or to give some rest to his land. The white variety of the poppy is the one that is grown. It is sown broadcast and very thickly, and when it first comes up resembles a very abundant crop of dandelions. This redundancy is soon reduced by the ryot, who with a short curved knife hacks away superfluous plants, till those that are left stand some six inches from each other. This reducing process has to be gone through many times, and the ground kept clear of weeds until the plant is six inches high. The fields are also irrigated once a week, until the buds are about to burst into bloom. It is this irrigation, probably, that accounts for the inferiority in the percentage of morphia in Persian opium. And, now that the poppies are in flower and the petals are about to fall, the ryots, under the direction of men from the neighbourhood of Yezd, who travel all over Persia to superintend the gathering of the crop and its subsequent preparation, begin to collect the opium from the plant. This is done by scoring the seed-vessels with a small three-bladed knife, which makes three gashes an eighth of an inch apart and three-quarters of an inch long. The operation is performed in the afternoon. From these gashes the opium exudes in tears, which are collected at early dawn by scraping with a piece of glass or a knife. If unfortunately a heavy shower of rain should fall, a large proportion of, or even all, the opium may be lost. This gashing and scraping is repeated a second and even a third time. The poppies, after the opium is extracted, are used as

fodder. The ryot often has advances (at heavy interest) made to him upon his crop, and at times the speculator is severely bitten.

In the old days, when opium was purchased by rule of thumb, and passed through several hands before it reached the manufacturer, the fresh opium was much adulterated; and it was this adulteration that gave the Persian opium the bad name it so long retained in the English market. But an enterprising English firm sent one of its partners to Ispahan, and that energetic gentleman succeeded in making the Persians understand that honesty is the best policy. The brand of the firm he represented was a guarantee of the purity of the manufactured article; and as the imports of the firm to this country were always of exactly the same standard as the sample that preceded them, Persian opium of their brand became a regular and saleable commodity. Already Persian opium has driven that of Turkey out of the great market of China; but the quantity of morphine contained in it is far less than that of the drug grown in India. Lately the average price of Persian opium has been 16s. a pound in London wholesale. Of course the Armenian middleman continues to adulterate the drug; but he hardly finds a profit in doing so, and his wares seldom leave the country.

When the first supplies of the drug begin to arrive at the "godown" of the merchant, they come in a semi-fluid mass, generally in a state of fermentation, giving out the characteristic smell of the drug and therewith an odour resembling that of rotten apples. The opium is generally brought in copper pots and earthen jars—usually they are cooking utensils im-

pressed into the service. As the opium arrives it is poured into copper pans, some of which will hold as much as five cwt. Workmen are engaged at so much a day, or in gangs who are paid so much per chest. The daily wage varies from two to five kerans (a keran being 9*d.*). The liquid portion of the opium is boiled down and returned to the pans, the whole is then beaten up till it is of the consistence of strawberry-jam freshly made. And now begins the opium manufacture—the *teriak-mali*, literally opium-rubbing. Thin planks, a yard long and a foot wide, are smeared with the paste, first longitudinally, then horizontally, by means of wooden spatulas. As each plank is covered it is placed on end in the strong sun, and when sufficiently dry the opium is scraped off for rolling into cakes. If the opium is very moist, or the sun very weak, this process has to be repeated. The opium is now kneaded into cakes of a pound, three drachms over being allowed for loss of weight in transit. The cakes have the shape and appearance of a large squared bun. They are varnished with some of the liquor or with a composition, and when quite dry are stamped with the maker's name. And now each cake is wrapped in paper, and laid in cases made as strong and light as possible, as the duty is levied at per case. The cases are sewn up in raw hides, or dammered, *i.e.*, packed in tarpaulin.

It does not appear that the moderate use of Persian opium in the country itself is deleterious. Opium-eaters there are, it is true, but they are few. Opium-smoking is almost unknown; and opium when smoked is, as a rule, smoked by a native doctor's prescription. The opium pill-box, a tiny box of silver, is as common

in Persia as the snuff-box was once with us. Most men of forty among the upper and middle classes use it. They take from a grain to a grain and a-half, divided into two pills, one in the afternoon and one at night. Travellers, too, almost invariably take it.

In 1871 the value of the export of opium from Persia was 696,000 rupees. In 1881 it had increased to 8,470,000 rupees, and the increase has been steady each year. Probably this increase will continue, and ultimately Indian opium will find a rival, and our revenue in India will be thus much reduced. For the Chinese market a certain portion of oil is used in the preparation of Persian opium. The preparation of the opium for market is a very anxious time with the merchant. He has to be constantly in and out, and is obliged to pay watchers, and pay them well, to keep pilferers from his goods. The labourers engaged in the *teriak-mali* are searched on leaving, as a matter of course; but they generally manage to add considerably to their wages by what they can purloin. This is their "cabbage," or *modakel*—a word much in use in Persia, where as a rule a man's pay is often much less than his *modakel*. A man's pay is usually known, and the common questions among Persians are "What is his pay?" and "What is his *modakel*?" A servant's *modakel* is what he can take from the tradespeople, generally ten per cent.; a governor's *modakel* what he can exact from the taxpayers over and above the taxes; the Shah's *modakel* what he can sell the governorships for; and so on.

The manufacture of opium is rude in the extreme, and opportunities for speculation many. It has been

suggested to rub the opium on a hot plate with a chocolate-making machine, but no one has tried it. Were it not for the opium-growing, the King's ryots would find it hard to pay their taxes. But the indiscriminate cultivation of this valuable crop, to the exclusion of cereals, tends to render bread and horse-feed dearer; and if the cultivation of the poppy continues to spread as it has done in the last twenty years, Persia will cease to be, what it is now, the cheapest place to live in in the world.





CHAPTER XXIX.

PERSIAN HORSES.

Dealers—An *Armenian* horse-dealer—"Bishoping"—Turkoman horses—Karabagh horses—Arabs—Gulf Arabs—Breeding-places—Yabū—Punches—Remounts.

ONE of the exports of Persia is horses. The Persian dealer travels over the country, having agents and correspondents in every large town. He buys for the Indian market. His destination, when he has got together a likely lot of animals, is usually Bombay or Bangalore; a few dealers try Kurrachee. As a rule, the Persian horse-dealer buys nothing under fourteen hands, which he terms *andazeh*, the height—that is to say, regulation height. My next-door neighbour was one of these travelling dealers, and a very successful and respectable man; for to be a horse-dealer on a large scale in Persia means the possession of ready cash, and in the East, as well as in the West, ready cash means respectability.

In Persia horse-dealing is a Mussulman occupation; there is no such being in that country as a Christian, fire-worshipping, or Jewish horse-dealer. In this connection there is an amusing story. Less than five years ago an English officer started from Ispahan with much

secrecy, supposing himself disguised as an Armenian horse-dealer. With him was an English-speaking Armenian servant. No doubt this gentleman fancied he was performing a dark and mysterious part; but one thing was certain: as he proceeded towards Meshed he was commonly spoken of by the Persians as "the English sahib who declared that he was an Armenian horse-dealer;" and the secret mission of the gallant officer was a well-known joke at the Russian Legation at Teheran. An Armenian horse-dealer is a much more unlikely combination in Persia than a Chinese hansom cabman would be in Piccadilly.

The Persian horses exported to India are sold either as riding-horses and chargers at an average minimum price of six hundred rupees, or as artillery horses at a standard price of four hundred rupees; while the animals that remain unbought for these purposes are eagerly snapped up as carriage-horses. The Persian horse-dealer, even when most respectable, resorts to "bishoping:" which dictionaries define as "to use arts to make old horses look like young ones;" the arts used consisting in cutting the upper surface of the incisor teeth into a depression, and then with a chemical preparation blackening the cavity so as to imitate the "marks" of a young horse. It was imparted to me, as a great secret, that the operation was *always* performed during the voyage to India from the Persian Gulf, the instrument used being a dentist's rose-head hand-drill. Strings of from twenty to more than a hundred animals were dispatched at a time by the dealer I have mentioned. In this business he had made what is considered a fortune in Persia, certainly a

comfortable competence ; but having married an old princess of expensive habits, whose poor though aristocratic relations made a practice of dining with and borrowing money of him, the unhappy gentleman's finances were very much reduced.

The various kinds of horse seen in Persia are the Turkoman, the Karabagh, the pure Arab, and the Shiraz or Gulf Arab, and their crosses: these are the horses of breed. The Turkoman horse is a tall, bony, and ungainly animal, often over seventeen hands high, never under fifteen ; the head is large and the ears long. They have no barrel, and are generally "tucked up." The mane, naturally very short, is either entirely shaven or burned off, and the tails are very scanty. But the Turkoman horse, though not fleet, has wonderful stay. He will, with his loose canter, cover a hundred miles a day for ten days. To the Turkomans themselves, in their man or head-stealing raids or chuppaos, these horses are invaluable ; for they will travel on the hardest and scantiest fare, and after being trained specially will endure and perform over bad roads long journeys that no other horse would accomplish. The Turkoman horse, however, is seldom seen south of Teheran, and is never exported to India, where he would stand no chance in the market with his more handsome rival the Australian-bred horse, the handsome, big, but usually vicious "Waler." The Karabagh horse running from fourteen and a-half to fifteen and a-half hands, is the favourite of the Persian exporting dealer. He is very similar to the "Waler" in appearance, much cheaper in price, and finds a very ready market. He is a bad imitation of the English hunter—handy and

fairly good-tempered, never ailing in an Indian climate, and usually a weight-carrier. He is generally a bay with black points. He always has a black mark running from the mane to the tail, and often a cross at the withers. He is generally bought as an officer's charger or as a cavalry remount; while, if with a good shoulder, he frequently goes into the artillery. The Arab is too well known to need description; he is everything that can be desired in a horse: his only weak points are want of size, and daintiness; his temper is angelic; he is usually grey in colour. The Gulf Arabs, so called in India because they are shipped from the Persian Gulf, are a cross between big Persian mares and the smaller but better-bred Arab horses. They are really, excluding the Arabs, the best horses in the country: having all the good points of the pure Arab horse, and in addition what he has not—size. They are sure-footed, never sick or sorry, will go over the roughest ground at speed, and are full of spirit. They cost from eighteen to twenty pounds in Persia at a minimum.

None but entire horses are exported from Persia. Save as carriage-horses, geldings are never seen; and as a rule a Persian will never sell a mare unless she be barren. The finest horses in Persia are bred by the Eeliauts, or wandering tribes. The wealth of these people consists entirely of cattle, sheep, and horses: they wander from their winter quarters in the plains, to their summer quarters, or yeilaks, in the mountains; each tribe and each family having its recognized grazing-ground, and its spring or share of one.

Besides the horses mentioned, the ordinary yabū, or pony of Persia, which is of too little intrinsic value for

export, is not an animal to be despised. He is strong, under fourteen hands, of no breed in particular, unless he happen to belong to the race of "punches" found in Ispahan. These animals are cobs of great power, short-legged, big-barrelled, never over fourteen hands (generally less). They will carry immense burdens, and are much valued in Ispahan as amblers and for the purpose of crossing with asses to produce mules. And the Persian mule in his way is perfect—*i.e.*, as a hardy beast of burden. The "punch" of Ispahan is heavy, big-headed, with ample mane and tail, and is usually hairy under the jaw.

Possibly the native dealer is the cheapest means of importing horses into India; but as it has been worth our while to buy mules for our Afghan and Abyssinian wars in Persia, it might be also worth our while to go to the fountain-head for Indian remounts. One thing is certain: unless the Persian horse-dealer makes a profit of cent. per cent. after paying all expenses, he looks upon himself as deficient in sharpness. Another thing, too, is certain: Persian horse-dealers thrive even so well at times as to marry princesses. In Russia—particularly in Southern Russia—horses are even cheaper than in Persia; but the horses found in Russia are heavier animals, and they are not suited for severe work in a hot country like India. The Persian animals always do well, and are, as a rule, capable of almost unlimited hard work over the worst of country and on the poorest fare.



CHAPTER XXX.

HOW PERSIANS DIE AND ARE BURIED.

A dying man—Crab-broth—The wife—Chamber of death—Professional mourners—Washers of the dead—A Funeral—A Graveyard.

THE sick man lies *in extremis* on a thin mattress upon the floor, covered by a quilted silken coverlet. Twenty or thirty persons are in the room where he is dying. The smoke of many hubble-bubbles clouds the air; whispered conversation is general. The doctors have declared their patient's condition hopeless, and, as a last resort, certain charms suggested by a weird-looking dervish have been tried. But the crab-broth, prepared from the tiny crustaceans that inhabit the streamlets round Shiraz, the patient has been unable to swallow; and the dervish points out to the relatives of the dying man that his panacea has only not proved infallible because it was tried too late. A veiled woman, the wife of the dying man, sits weeping at the side of her husband's pillow. She frequently holds to his face a moistened piece of mud torn from the wall (this wetted mud is supposed to have a very reviving influence, and is used by Persians as we use smelling-salts). Tea is

handed round in small cups; the crowd in the room becomes greater; every window is shut; and as the outside temperature is ninety degrees, some idea of the heat within can be formed. The crowd is not here from mere curiosity. A man is sick—then where should his friends be, they say, if not by his bedside? The samovars (Russian tea-urns) steam and bubble; the room is filled with clouds of tobacco-smoke and the steam from the urns. And now, just as two hundred years ago was done in England, a fowl is killed and placed warm and bleeding on the patient's feet. All is of no avail, however. The man has breathed his last. The wife yields her place by the bedside. Moistened cotton-wool is placed in the mouth of the dead, in the orifices of the nostrils, and in the ears. A moollah begins to read aloud the prescribed portion of the Korân, commencing "O man, I swear by the instructive Korân that thou art one of the messengers of God sent to show the right way," etc. This portion of the Mussulman's sacred book was called by Mahommed himself "the heart of the Korân." And now all present witness aloud that the dead man was a good and pious Mahomedan. The limbs are composed, and a cup of water is placed at the head of the corpse. No sooner is this done than a moollah ascends to the flat roof of the house and begins to read in a shrill monotone certain verses from the holy book. This announces to the neighbours that the man is veritably dead; and at the same moment his relations shriek and wail "Woe, woe! he is dead—he has passed away." These are the expressions of a real grief. But presently the professional mourners arrive and rend the air with

their shrill screaming—which is like the “keening” of the Irish.

The house is soon filled with friends and neighbours, who add their cries to the screams of the mourners. The women of the family hasten to array themselves in “bitter” (*i.e.* sombre) garments—not in actual black, but in sad colours; neither they nor the men wash or dress their hair until the funeral and the first days of mourning are over. The male relatives do not literally rend their garments, but give them the right appearance by opening certain seams of their coats and cloaks with a pen-knife; and instead of casting dust upon their heads they dab mud on their hats. And now come the “washers of the dead.” To each parish are attached a family of these people, who get a despised livelihood by performing the last offices for the dead. The corpse having been washed at an adjoining stream, the hands are placed across the chest, and it is wrapped in the shroud of cotton cloth that the deceased has probably had by him, as a sort of *memento mori*, for years. Camphor (real vegetable camphor) is placed beneath the shroud, and the body is laid in a rough coffin made of thin planks and brought back to the house. The coffin in Persia is of a thin and unsubstantial kind, and the burial always takes place within twenty-four hours of decease.

Usually in the cool of the morning or afternoon the funeral is performed. If the deceased is a poor man, the coffin is laid in a rough wooden covered bier or *tabūt*. In the case of the very poor, or in times of epidemics, the coffin is often dispensed with, and the dead are interred in their shrouds. These, formed

often of many yards of cotton cloth, are swathed tightly round them, as was done in ancient Egypt. Often a much larger tabūt is used ; and then the wealth or rank of the deceased is shown by the dark Cashmere shawls which are hired for the purpose of wrapping over the wood-work and canopy that covers the imarah, or portable shrine on which the coffin is borne ; in this case the coffin is also covered with shawls. Shawls, which are constantly bought and sold in Persia, are at once unsaleable if they smell of camphor ; for it is inferred that they have been used for covering the dead. To preserve them from moth, shawls in the East are always kept in boxes of cypress-wood. The friends and relatives, and even passers-by, willingly take their places as bearers of the dead ; for it is considered one of the highest forms of charity to assist in the work of bearing a Mussulman to his last home. The graveyard is reached—a bare spot outside the town, the home of the jackal and hyæna. There are no waving cypresses here, as in Turkey. A few small arched shrines—generally in ruins—show where some holy man has been interred. Grotesque stone lions of life-size mark the graves of those who were warriors ; while little square niches a yard high contain highly-coloured pictures of unwedded youths, or of those slain in war. As a rule, however, small flat stones record the names of the dead, a few texts from the Korân marking the piety of their relations ; but often the little mounds have merely a row of flints that loving hands have placed there, or a rough bit of rock or a tile at head and foot. The nearest relatives lay the body in the shallow grave, a priest says a prayer, the shroud is

loosened that the dead man may be enabled to arise at the resurrection without trouble, and the coffin-lid is replaced. Then another prayer is read. The "Fati-hat," or first chapter of the Korân, is recited by all—it is merely a short prayer—the grave is closed, a little water is sprinkled on it, and all is over. If the family of the deceased can afford it, a tiny tent is pitched, and a priest remains to pray and to read the Korân over the grave for many days.

The whole of the attendants of the funeral are entertained at dinner at the house of the deceased. The mourning is continued for a short period—a few days or a month, according to the wealth of the family. Then another lavish exercise of hospitality, and a dole to the poor, takes place; and this is the sign that the days of mourning are over. Sombre garments are cast aside; the family go to the public bath; once more they dye their hair with henna, also the soles of their feet and the palms of their hands, their nails and finger-tips. The women signalise the end of their mourning by a visit to the cemetery, taking with them sweetmeats and a peculiar kind of bread; they eat at the grave-side a small quantity of these, and what remains is given to the poor. A widow will often vow a monthly or yearly dole at her husband's grave; and the vow is always piously carried out.

Often among the rich or religious the body is merely placed in some mosque or shrine, as *amānat*—that is to say, on deposit. After some weeks, or months, or years, it is wrapped in thin felt and despatched with hundreds of others, by mule caravan, to holy Meshed, to be buried near Imam Riza; or to sacred Kerbela, to lie beside the

blessed Houssein. In travelling in Persia one frequently meets these caravans. Two or even four coffins are strapped on each mule. It is needless to add that they are most objectionable upon the road and in the caravanserais, and doubtless tend to spread plague and cholera. But coffins often form ordinary loads in a general caravan; they are not objected to, and are noted in the way-bill with other loads.





CHAPTER XXXI.

A CHRISTIAN VILLAGE IN MAHOMMEDAN PERSIA AND ITS GHOST STORY.

The real Armenian—Julfa—Its history—Its inhabitants—Julfa women—Illustrative story, "THE DEAD MAN'S SECRET."

MANY of us have never seen an Armenian. Those who have done so associate the name in their minds with small, active, dark-complexioned people with jetty hair: the males of preternatural activity in business, and of commercial acuteness not inferior to that ascribed to the Hebrew; the women beautiful in their youth, with the large dreamy eyes of the Oriental, but, like most Oriental women, losing their beauty soon. It is not with the Armenian as seen in England—the smart, well-educated financier or lawyer, the man who, save for his strange patronymic, is generally taken for a Greek or a Eurasian—but with the real Armenian, unadulterated by education or intermarriage, that we are concerned.

Julfa—an Armenian village now, but once almost a city, having its twenty-four parishes—has a curious history. Shah Abbas the Great, when desirous of interesting his subjects in commerce, by a word caused

to be transported the entire population of the town of Julfa on the Araxes (now an obscure hamlet on the Turco-Persian frontier, then a great and thriving city of Armenians) to the immediate environs of his own capital, Ispahan, in the centre of Persia. A large tract of land on the further bank of the river Zendarūd, on which the capital stood, was assigned to the Armenian immigrants. Parishes were marked out, lands in freehold were distributed. Churches, a monastery, a nunnery, even a cathedral, rapidly sprang up. For several years the Armenians had a good time under Shah Abbas the Beneficent; whose name in Persia even now is never uttered without a blessing by the weary traveller as he reposes, at the end of his long day's journey, in the vast caravanserais (models of what such gratuitous hotels should be) which bear the monarch's name. Very similar was the position of the Armenians in Persia to that of the Children of Israel in the land of Pharaoh; but, unlike the Israelites, for them there was never until these latter days any escape from the house of bondage.

The village of Julfa is one of the curiosities of the East that will probably cease to exist in the next fifty years. At present it merely serves the purpose of sheltering the Armenian Bishop and furnishing priests to the Armenians of India and the East. As soon as the Armenian youth can save enough to pay his passage he departs for British India, and soon by the exercise of his thrifty qualities attains a competence, sometimes even great wealth. As a rule, he does not return. The result of this continuous exodus is that the place is rapidly decaying. In the strangely dry climate of

Ispahan, where a bright knife if left about for a year does not tarnish, much less rust, where there is no smoky atmosphere to blacken and deface, may be frequently seen the spectacle of the entire side of some gaily-decorated and gilded room, fresh as if painted yesterday, forming a portion of the wall of the garden or vineyard that now covers what once was a teeming quarter of a populous town. Abandoned churches stand in the midst of fields. The Roman Catholics, however, though few in number, still carefully tend the decaying church which stands in the garden of the Jesuit Fathers—a garden still celebrated for its quinces and apricots.

Armenians are a very conservative people. The women of Julfa, save a very few only, speak nothing but Armenian; and to many of the males also Persian is a sealed book. Although the Armenians of Hamadan have adopted the Persian costume, the Armenians of Julfa and the villages in its vicinity still retain the ancient dress of their race and cling to the many curious customs of their people. The Julfa woman, covered by an immense white veil, and her mouth muffled up winter and summer, silently perambulates the Julfa streets like a ghost in its winding-sheet. Still under the archways of the ancient houses as yet undemolished, sit groups of women knitting socks and chattering in the uncouth Armenian tongue. Should any Persian or European wayfarer inquire his way of them, a sudden cackle is heard, like that of a disturbed flock of geese, and the huge doors of these gateways are slammed in his face and carefully barred. Widows, and wives whose husbands are earning their living in other lands, form the bulk of the female population of Julfa; and, owing to the continuous departure

of the Julfa youths, seeking fresh fields and pastures new, the females are in a large majority. In hard times, how these poor women manage to exist is a mystery. In time of plenty all goes well enough with the Julfa woman; she knits from morning to night, the woollen and cotton socks she produces find a ready sale among the Persians, and her earnings maintain her comfortably. Besides, the Armenian emigrant in India does not, as a rule, forget the old folks he has left behind. All the brighter and more energetic spirits having left the place, there remain only the less intelligent and enterprising among the men—mostly the few who have inherited gardens or vineyards, by the careful cultivation of which they can eke out a scanty subsistence, or who possess houses that they are unable or loth to part with. These men struggle on, living from hand to mouth, and burying their hard-earned savings, if they have any. Then there is the large army of pensioners, and the priests. There they stand or squat in rows, in the sun or in the shade, according to the time of year. These men have some relative who has made, or is making, his way out in the world; and on him they live. They will not work. Why should they? as they say: “Our nephew, son, or uncle, as the case may be, is a rich man. Work?—we live on our property.” They are warmly clad, they are thrifty, though they do get drunk, and they enjoy a life of “*dolce far niente*.” One thing they will seldom do, these native Christians of Persia—they rarely apostatize to Mahommedanism; and, considering their position, they deserve great credit on this score. But they become Roman Catholics or members of the Church of England without very much pressure

or persuasion. The charms of indirect protection, or permanent employment of a light character, are often irresistible; and the Church Missionary Society numbers many of these men, and no Mahomedans, among its converts in Persia. The Church of Rome makes fewer converts, having no temporal advantages to offer; but those it does make do not relapse. Mariolatry is one of the tenets of the Armenian Christian: he curses the Persian and the missionary. The Armenian convert to the doctrines of the Church of England curses the Persian, the Virgin, and the Armenian priest; while the orthodox Armenian curses Persian, Catholic priest, and English missionary. Thus we find that, no matter what the religion of the Julfa Armenian, cursing the Persian is a part of it.

Before the advent of the Church Missionary Society, which has given to the youth of both sexes in Julfa good and gratuitous education and medical advice, the Julfa priest ruled the roast in the little Christian community. Either returning from a successful mission among his rich co-religionists in Batavia or Bombay, or awaiting such a mission from the favour of his bishop, he passed his time in loafing from house to house, trading on the sympathies of the women and the ignorance and bigotry of the men. A sober priest was then very rare, in a place where wine was as plentiful as water and a bottle of arrack could be bought for 3d. But now his occupation has gone. Why should an Armenian feed his priest, much less provide him with liquor, when he can still remain a Christian and avoid the burden by calling himself a Protestant? Ah! but his womenkind's savings still find a secret way to the pocket of the

forsaken priest. The Scriptures, being written in the ancient Armenian language, were not understandable of the vulgar; and so the priest interpreted them at his own sweet will.

There are many signs that Julfa, the nidus of the real Armenian, will not exist much longer. The ancient dress is disappearing fast; so is the ancient tongue. The strange custom that a bride should be the slave of her mother-in-law and never speak in her presence, making only signs, is to a certain extent already modified; many daughters-in-law now dare to whisper in the presence of their mothers-in-law. Some of the women had been dumb for over twenty years when in the august society of their husbands' mothers. But the women of Julfa still carry their fortunes round their waists in the shape of huge plates of silver forming a belt. They still continue to wear the ancient costume of their race—the trousers, the “mobled” head, the folded muslin tightly covering the nose and mouth. No virtuous Armenian woman of the old school under fifty will let any man see her upper lip even. But their dresses are cut very low, their bosoms being slightly veiled by a thin net of crimson silk. From time to time the Armenian trader in British India, to whom the ties of blood are dear, will send for one of his Julfa nieces to wed one of his sons: the girl's sole fortune being her skill in knitting socks and her knowledge of her grandmother's receipt for pickling walnuts. The Armenian of Julfa, oppressed by his Mahommedan rulers and eaten up by his priests, is but the chrysalis of the more magnificent insect—the free and intelligent citizen of the world, the enlightened, civilized, educated

and accomplished Armenian, who attains the highest honours in Oriental diplomacy or the foremost positions in European trade.

The following story illustrates the peculiarities of the Julfa Armenian. I need not add that William Atkins is a purely imaginary person; the treasure, unfortunately too, is mythical; the scene is laid in the house where the author lived in Julfa for some years.

THE DEAD MAN'S SECRET.

William Atkins, fitter, was lucky in being an artizan, when some eighteen years ago he took the Queen's shilling; for he was enlisted as a sapper, and as soon as he had learnt his drill he was given that practical instruction which converts the British sapper into a really handy man, or Jack-of-all-trades. He was made to go through a little of everything, and as he was not a "shirker," was soon promoted to be lance-corporal, a promotion carrying rank, pay, and privilege; true, these three advantages were small, but they were advantages. Many were the tales that Atkins would tell of his experiences at Chatham, particularly of the ingenious methods of detecting and punishing "shirkers," adopted by the eccentric instructor, Sergeant-Major P——. There was a grim jocoseness in the determined endeavours of Sergeant-Major P—— to obtain for Her Majesty really active men, and so long as they did a fair—a very fair—day's work, the recruits under his charge had nothing to complain of. But the "shirkers" feared P—— as a cat dreads the water. And they had reason. Full of guile was Sergeant-Major P——; he

would, having drawn his squad up in line preparatory to setting the daily tasks, call out:—

“Fall out, draughtsmen.”

This in the eye of the inexperienced “shirker” meaning some light morning’s job, some half-dozen sappers, besides those who were really draughtsmen, would fall out with the rest. Alas, for them! hopes of indoor and sedentary work soon vanished; P——’s eagle eye would detect them in a moment, and P——’s accurate memory told him they were not really draughtsmen at all—but his inveterate enemies the “shirkers;” with his cane he would point out to the smiling “shirkers” that he needed six really good draughtsmen that day; the doomed ones on being indicated were formed into line, as they supposed for a morning’s loafing, but P—— would simply march them to the huge barrack-roller, and then the hapless six were directed to tug the great machine up and down the barrack-yard. A similar trick would be played on “shirkers” who answered to the name of artists and decorators; a huge double tie-brush being given them, and a pail of whitewash, the order was issued “Make me a picture of that wall,” a “study in monochrome” that would puzzle even the ingenious and imaginative Mr. Whistler. Such were the devices of Sergeant-Major P—— for obtaining a fair day’s work from the recruits under his charge.

But Atkins was not a “shirker;” being of a stalwart frame, the “muck-shifting,” to which he was at times put when on “field-work,” and which consisted in excavating so many yards of earth and pitching it a certain distance, was child’s play to him; though it

was a terrible task to the "draughtsman," clerk, or "artist;" who, when Atkins, his work done, was donning his jacket and lighting his pipe to return to barracks, looked on him with envy, their hands being in blisters, and their allotted and measured work only half-accomplished.

Atkins, then, having passed in drill, and gone through the necessary field-work, was competent to enter one of the so-called military schools. He had previously from the untidy mechanic been converted into a smart and upright man; he had learnt to make the best of himself and his clothes; he had also learnt various useful arts; when "pontooning," he had, willy-nilly, learnt to swim and to row; he had even gone down in a diving-dress, and having put down the heavy weights at the bottom of the Medway without orders, suddenly arrived at the surface, feet upwards: from the infinitesimal amount of his pay remaining to him—stoppages having been freely deducted—he had learnt economy; and hard work, sobriety, and the regular life had made him a kind of healthy Hercules. Atkins, being given a choice of a school, chose the telegraph: that school was then a novelty and popular, many good appointments were given from it, and as fast as the men passed through it they were rapidly appointed to pleasant "billets" abroad or at home. After some four months in the telegraph school, Atkins could take his instrument, the simple "Morse," to pieces; he could even "send" ten words a minute; and he could read from the tape the words in the "dot-and-dash," or Morse alphabet, at about the same rate.

Telegraphy then was not as now, a crowded and ill-

paid handicraft, and, as before said, telegraphists were in great demand. A "batch" of twelve corporals were required for the Government Telegraph Department in Persia; Atkins and eleven others were selected, and after a fortnight's run to see his friends, he proceeded to draw his kit as provided by a liberal English Government: this kit was suited for the work which Atkins, now a full corporal, would have to do: a couple of complete strong tweed suits, some cord trousers, two pair of ammunition boots, a revolver, a Westley Richards carbine, a sun-helmet, and his regimental kit.

Atkins after numerous delays arrived in Persia. On his reaching Bombay the authorities had declined having anything to do with him and his eleven companions; the same thing happened at Karrachi; and it was only after a good many letters had been written that Atkins, very stout from idleness, and very brown from sun, landed at Bushire in the Persian Gulf, in a temperature of about 120° F., arrayed in the full-dress costume of a Corporal of Engineers. He and his eleven companions were escorted by a dirty and admiring mob of Arabs; and warmly clad as he was, it is rather doubtful which he suffered most from, the very powerful sun, or the great amount of interest displayed in him by a native mob.

Atkins and his companions having been inspected by his officer, who had been anxiously expecting him for several months, was ordered to fall out, and having been directed to dress himself in civilian clothes, carried out the order with great delight. He never put on uniform or fell in again.

The position now attained by Atkins was not bad: he had his corporal's pay, and in addition Rs.100, or, in those happy times, £10 a month, with certain allowances in lieu of kit, quarters, horse-allowance, if employed on line work, and various minor advantages; among others eight hours a day duty only, while on office duty, and being very much his own master when not so; and finding himself in a country where he could have servants to wait on him, and his income enabling him to live on the fat of the land, he had only to keep sober and live cleanly till the time arrived when he could take his pension; or, the twelve years of his engagement being up, return home; or, if he preferred it, enter civilian life as Mr. William Atkins.

With Atkins's career in Persia we have not much to do; he soon acquired the language, and the benevolent Indian Government hastened to present him with £18, as a gratuity for a successful passing of an elementary examination in the colloquial, and the reading and translating of a simple story in Forbes's Persian Grammar.

Atkins, too, had been sober and steady; his sweetheart had joined him at Julfa, a suburb of Ispahan; on her arrival they were married with much ceremony. He had been promoted, too, and now drew nearly £250 a year pay, and was Sergeant Atkins. He lived in a nice large house allotted him by Government; it was old, but solid and good, and Atkins had furnished it well for his pretty little bride; but Atkins had one carking care: he had not been home for twelve years, he had not saved money—for he kept a saddle-horse for his wife and another for himself—and he had been

liberal. He had honestly spent his money to the best advantage in making himself of importance, which he looked on as a duty, and he had in a way succeeded—for Atkins Sahib's credit was high in the bazaar; he might have even borrowed enough money at twenty per cent. without security from the local bankers, had he willed it, to take him home. But Atkins was not a borrower; he looked on it as mean. Had he not in the early days burnt his uniform, because it was despised by the natives? and had he not every year persisted in giving away to his native servant the "never-to-be-worn-out" or ammunition boots, that a benevolent English Government persisted in serving out to him?

Of the batch that came out with him, Atkins and three others were the only "old hands" left. Some had died, others had gone home invalided; one man came into money; and the newer sappers were of less sturdy stuff than Atkins; while many vacancies had been filled by Eurasians, Armenians, and the professional telegraphists, none of whom foregathered with Atkins, and on none of whom did he look with a comrade's eye. The final horror had been suffered, too, by Atkins. He had served under a civilian, and the department was becoming rapidly civilian. Kings came who knew not Joseph; their ways were not his ways.

Atkins grew tired of Persia. A baby died. "The climate," said the young mother. "We should be better off at home, William," said the temptress.

"I must stay for my pension," said Atkins.

The wife pouted, and determined to save it up from

the housekeeping. She attempted it. Atkins grew uncomfortable: his old servants, the clever cook and handy table-man, the privileged peculators of years, in their gay Mussulman dress and with their merry smiling ways, were replaced by a greasy Armenian and his son. Atkins, on ordering his horse, found the saddle put on the cantle end on the withers, and the curb chain in the horse's mouth. The next morning, when about to proceed to his office duties, his boots were brought to him, bright, but blackleaded.

He asked the missionary to dinner, but his Armenian cook—alas! a Protestant—was found in the kitchen drunk, and Atkins was compelled to apologise to the missionary for having asked him to partake of a Barmecide feast of visionary fleshpots.

Atkins went hungry to bed, having in vain tried to satisfy the cravings of his wife and family with a tin of preserved oysters and three sticks of chocolate. He went to bed, but not to sleep. He turned and tossed on his pillow, he listened to the dismal but childlike weepings and wailings of the jackals in the streets, and then he was adjured to catch a mosquito which his wife heard under their mosquito gauze. In vain Atkins declared the mosquito was imaginary. With a woman's pertinacity, she compelled him to light a candle. What usually happens under these circumstances happened to Atkins: he set the mosquito gauze alight. Next morning his young wife and baby were hideous objects, their faces swollen and their tempers savage. Atkins, too, had burnt his hands in extinguishing the blazing gauze.

Having burnt his hands, Atkins was obliged to go

on the sick list, and no sooner was the news of his little accident spread abroad in Julfa than, as is the custom in Persia, native visitors began to pour in. To deny oneself to a visitor when ill, unless very seriously so, is to give mortal offence. Atkins, who willingly offended no one, sat in his principal room, carpeted with old Persian rugs that Wardour Street would have been anxious to buy, could Wardour Street have had the chance, his tingling fingers wrapped in oiled lint. Atkins wearily sat out guest after guest. As each Armenian or Persian filed out, having been regaled with the regulation pipes and sherbet or coffee, Atkins heaved a sigh of relief.

He was just congratulating himself that his penance was over, when his Armenian servant, who was sober for the nonce, announced that his landlord, Kojah Zeitūn (literally, Mr. Olive), was desirous of seeing him. Wearily he gave the signal for his admission. Zeitūn was a notorious phrase-spinner, and after the usual salutations—

“How is your excellency’s health?”

“By your kindness, thank God, it is better. You are indeed a sight for sore eyes!” and so on, the loquacious Zeitūn comfortably composed himself in his chair for a chat.

Now Zeitūn was Atkins’s landlord, and as Atkins wanted some repairs done, he was loth to show too pointedly his desire to get rid of his visitor. He need not have troubled himself. As long as there was a chance of gratuitous refreshment, Zeitūn would not leave the chair.

“Do not put yourself out on my account, sahib;

make no stranger of me, I beg. You, as an invalid, will lie down. What is sickness without repose but a real torment? I felt how terribly dull you would be alone."

Here a pause took place. Atkins took his visitor at his word, and lay down. He said nothing, hoping thus to induce his unwelcome guest to take his leave; but he had reckoned without his host, or rather guest. The word-weaver began to try and amuse him with local politics. Atkins, his eyes closing with sleep, was roused by a loud—

"Sahib—Sa——hib!"

He apologised, and opened his reluctant eyes. More commonplaces from his landlord, but no sign of any move on his part.

The landlord now began a long story about his great-uncle, who when a youth in Bombay, where he had gone to serve in the shop of some relative, as is the custom among these people, had been burnt in the hand in a similar way to Atkins; and the progress of his more than miraculous cure was being narrated with infinite detail and repetition when Atkins's eyes closed again. He was just, in fact, dropping off, when Kojah Zeitūn again roused him—

"Sahib, Sa——hib!"

Again Atkins apologised, and roused himself to order a pipe for the interminable landlord, hoping that he would take the hint and go.

But, no; the Kojah was comfortable: in a cool room, consuming gratuitous smoke; with a probability, nay, a positive certainty, of gratuitous tea; and, who could tell? a fair prospect of eleemosynary brandy, and real French

brandy—not the “fixed bayonets” of Bombay—looming, nay, visible, in the future; for the sharp eye of the Armenian had caught sight of a bottle of “Three Star Hennessy,” unwisely standing in a recess. Under such circumstances, what Armenian in all Persia would budge? If such a prodigy existed, the man was not worthy Zeitūn. He drew his threadbare cloak tightly round him, a gesture that betokened the phrase, “*J’y suis, j’y reste.*”

“I *won’t* leave you, sahib,” said he, extending his hand for the water-pipe that the convert to Protestantism, the drunken and dirty, but repentant, cook presented; “I won’t leave you.”

“Your kindness is too great—may your shadow never be less, Kojah Zeitūn,” said poor Atkins, inwardly resolving that that same shadow should never again darken his doors.

“No, sahib, I *won’t* leave you; a sick man should never be left alone; you are depressed, sahib, and I will relate a little story about this house, my grandfather’s house. Ah! he *was* a man, a rich man, sahib; he built this house, this substantial house, and it cost him nothing—nothing, sahib.”

This extraordinary assertion apparently aroused the expiring attention of Sergeant Atkins.

“Cost him nothing? Building was cheap in those days, Kojah Zeitūn, but I don’t see how it could have cost him nothing.”

“Nevertheless it was so, sahib—this big house cost my grandfather nothing.”

Atkins’s curiosity was now really roused, and forgetting his smarting fingers, he turned to the Armenian

with an expression of amused incredulity. Telling his servant to bring tea, he composed himself to listen to the narrative that it was now impossible to avoid.

"I was five years old at the time, sahib, when my grandfather bought a small house and a large vineyard here—our vineyard is still, as it was then, one of the best in Julfa—and the little house was cheap, decidedly cheap; there were two rooms opening one into the other, a store-room for grain, and a small yard with a high wall round it; in the corner of the yard was a well, a rather big well."

"I still don't see how *this* house cost your grandfather nothing, Zeitūn," impatiently remarked Atkins.

"Ah, that's what we are coming to, sahib! My grandfather was a hale old man of sixty, and he and his three sons, my father the eldest, and his two unmarried brothers my uncles, worked hard in the vineyard, and got a fair living out of it. In those days Ispahan was not the ruin you now see. No, it was indeed a true proverb "*Ispahān nisve Jehan*" (Ispahan is half the world). We sold the produce well, and my mother's earnings as a sock-knitter helped us out. Whose grapes were better than ours? Who grew finer lettuces? We rubbed along, sahib, and we were contented. But one spring-time came a drought—the price of water for irrigating our vineyard rose to an absurd height, and we could not afford to buy the water—we were too poor. My father and my two uncles hired themselves as day-labourers, for there was little to do in our own vineyard; and though we Armenians prefer working for our own hand, still, one must live, sahib. My grandfather, as an old man, though hale, could not get

employment as a hired man, and so was left at home, where he occupied himself in pruning and tying up the vines; but there was very little to do, as, being unwatered, the greater portion of our big garden lay fallow.

“One day in drawing water for the house, my grandfather brought in the water-jar to my grandmother, and I noticed that they both wept. The water was muddy, and the well had become nearly dry. In Persia, as *you* know from experience, prolonged drought means famine. ‘I must deepen the well,’ said my grandfather. ‘No, Ovannes,’ cried my grandmother, though without raising her voice; for the Armenian women in those days, *sahib*, were ever modest, and talked in whispers; and one seldom heard their voices, and never saw their noses, mouths or chins.* ‘Oh, Ovannes, you are an old man; such work is not fit for you—let our sons do it to-morrow.’

“‘Daughter of my uncle,’ my grandfather replied, ‘who will bring at the ringing of the evening bell the three *kerans*† that my three sons will have earned? No,’ said he, with a sigh, ‘I may be an old man, but I can dig another yard out of the soft mud at the bottom of our well. Say nothing, woman, to the young men. I shall do it to-morrow, and *Zeitūn* will help me. Won’t you, my boy?’

“I was delighted: the dignity of helping my grandfather was pleasant to me. Next day at dawn my father and two uncles left for their work, and my

* Armenian women cover their mouths and noses with a cloth or *keichief*; this is the sign of modesty.

† A *keran* was then worth 1s. 4d.

grandfather, stripped to his shirt and drawers, and with his grey locks covered by the beautifully-quilted conical cap of common chintz which is usually worn by the labouring population of Ispahan and its neighbourhood, and by the Jews in the rest of Persia, beckoned me to come and assist him. We entered the arched room in which was the well just where you see it now, sahib," said the Armenian, pointing across the courtyard. "My grandfather had given me a little clay lamp to carry, and a small *papier-mâché* bottle containing the impure castor-oil that is burnt with a twisted cotton wick, in lieu of candles, throughout Persia. He removed the wheel-rope and bucket, and proceeded to descend the well by placing his back against one side of it and inserting his toes into holes or against projections which existed in the opposite wall.

"I felt somewhat relieved when my old grandfather reached the bottom, and cheerfully called on me to lower down his spade and the lamp. The well was not deep. My grandfather, with a few blows of his spade, excavated a sort of niche in the earthen wall of the well—for it was only lined to about six feet from the bottom—in it he placed the lamp, and filling it with oil, lighted it.

"I now replaced the wheel and bucket, and for some hours I, then a strong boy of twelve, drew up the leathern bucket half-full of mud and water, which grandfather filled rapidly from below. I was not strong enough to draw up full buckets, so he only half-filled them, and glad indeed was I when my grandfather told me that the work was done. Grandfather

now came up in the same manner that he had descended; but he was pale as ashes, his hands shook, and he sat on the steps in the sun outside trembling as if with ague. I anxiously inquired if he were ill, and my usually kind grandfather astonished me by ordering me off, with an adjuration not to be too inquisitive.

“Next day came good news to us all. My grandfather informed us that a distant relative had repaid him a debt which he had long ago given up as a bad one. Plenty began to reign once more at home; the priests were now frequent visitors; my two uncles married, and married well; I was well and warmly clad; and gradually my grandfather built this house on the site of the little old one.

“When I was twenty, and about to be betrothed, as a wealthy man’s son should be, to a priest’s daughter, I was surprised to hear the screams of my mother—‘*Ai Astavarts, Astavarts*’ (Oh God, oh God!) I heard. I was ordered to run for a hakim at once, and on my return with one I found my poor grandfather ashy pale, and uttering inarticulate sounds: he had been stricken with paralysis, one side of his face was drawn down and one eye squinted painfully. For several hours my poor grandfather lingered; our parish priest, who appeared much excited and grieved, continually whispered in his ear, but, alas! the only intelligible word was my name, the rest mere inarticulate sounds. The poor old man knew us all, we each embraced him, and blinded with tears of real sorrow and affection my father and uncles besought our priest to let him die in peace; but the priest continued to attempt to rouse him, and it was only on our insistance that he consented

to desist at the last moment, and to administer to him the last rites of extreme unction.

"He had hardly concluded when my poor old grandfather passed away. Then the priest drew from his breast a folded sheet of paper.

"*'My children,'* said he, *'here is your father's will; I fear it will not benefit you much.'*

"We implored him to read it. It was short—very short. He stated his landed property to be his house and garden, which he divided into four shares, one to my father and each of my uncles, and one to me; and he directed that after his death my grandmother should reside with and be supported by my father.

"Then the will stated that his other property consisted of the sum of thirty-five thousand tomans* in cash; this he directed should be shared in a similar manner. At the mention of so immense a sum, I fear that our grief for our poor grandfather was somewhat overcome by our astonishment at the amount of our heritage. Already the second son began to remonstrate at the impropriety of the child Zeitūn (myself) inheriting any share at all, and the three brothers were about to come to high words when the father of my betrothed, our priest, said softly, with a sigh—*'Finish reading the will first, my sons, and then quarrel if you will.'* Having settled the distribution of his property, my grandfather's will concluded in these words:

"*'And I am resolved, in order to prevent dissension in my lifetime, that I will only reveal the hiding-place of my wealth on my death-bed.'*

"A gasp of astonishment came from each of us.

* At that date about £20,000.

“‘Yes, my children,’ said the priest, ‘where is your grandfather’s money? That he possessed it, I am well aware, but where it is secreted, I am ignorant—hence my attempts to get your grandfather to speak; but, alas! in vain—his money, I fear, has disappeared for ever.

“‘You are all aware,’ continued the priest, ‘that some ten years ago your grandfather was repaid an old debt of considerable amount. That was a mere history to deceive his fellow-townsmen. The real fact is that your grandfather discovered a treasure of forty thousand tomans; upon the five thousand tomans he has lived and built this, the finest house in Julfa, on the site of the old one; the remainder, as he tells you, he secreted. I have done all I could for you, my children, to ascertain the present hiding-place of this treasure. In vain, alas! Often has your grandfather, my son,’ said the priest, turning to me, ‘narrated how he, with your assistance, cleared out the drying well, and his pallor on coming to the surface was caused by a discovery he made in the wall of the well: in that wall was a small door covered by a layer of tiles; these your grandfather removed, and found a recess containing the treasure in silver coin. Without confiding his secret to a soul, he changed the hiding-place for a fresh one—where that may be, heaven only can say. Forgive me, my children, if I leave you to your grief.’

“‘Farewell, Zeitūn,’ said he, grasping my hand; ‘when you find your grandfather’s treasure, come to me for my daughter; do not think me hard, but it was only on your grandfather’s making over the eight thousand five hundred tomans to you that I consented

to the match.' He left us, and I could not complain—was he not doing the best he could for his child?"

"Did you ever find the money, Zeitūn?" said Atkins with a smile.

"Never, sahib. My father and my two uncles examined the house and dug in the vineyard, but never did they find so much as one black pul.* Gradually we sank lower and lower; we mortgaged the property; my two uncles and their wives died childless; my father and mother died too, and in a few years I found myself an orphan—my only worldly goods being the old title-deeds of this house, and the right to redeem the mortgage in ten years. What was I to do? To work here as a day-labourer would not have bettered my position. I was the laughing-stock of Julfa. We as a family were laughed at as 'the treasure-hunters;' for we had dug and probed our house till we had almost undermined the strong foundations. I did the best thing I could. I left the house in charge of the parish priest; I knew he would 'eat' any rent that might come in; but he would at least protect the doors and windows. To attempt to let it was useless—houses in ruined Julfa were valueless save as residences for their owners. I went to Bombay. In ten years I realised enough to live on; I returned here—the rest you know. I was happily enabled to let the old place to the English Government, and with English money the house has been done up."

"I wonder you didn't live in it yourself!"

"Ah," said the Armenian, turning pale, "I couldn't do that."

"Why?"

* The lowest form of copper coin in use in Persia.

"Will you promise never to repeat it if I tell you, Atkins sahib?"

"Oh, I promise," said the sergeant.

"Well, I saw my grandfather's ghost."

"Bosh!" replied the sergeant.

"Ah, but I did, though; dressed just as he was the day he deepened the well, his blue shirt and tucked-up shulwar* covered with mud, as were his feet and legs. I was frightened—I don't like ghosts. He beckoned me, and—well, I fainted."

Here Atkins gave vent to an audible snore as a hint to his visitor that his patience was at length exhausted, for he really was worn out with sleep, having taken a sleeping-draught by order of the telegraph doctor.

"Sahib, Sa——hib!"

Again Atkins opened his eyes.

"Sahib, I tell you what I will do."

"Well?"

"I'll sell you the reversion to the thirty-five thousand tomans for the bottle of brandy I see in the recess."

There was no other way of getting rid of the Armenian.

"Done!" said Atkins, with a sigh. "Take it, and remember the reversion is mine."

"Agreed," said the smiling Armenian, as he slipped the bottle of brandy into one of his capacious pockets. "Farewell, Atkins sahib, it is a bargain. I transfer my rights to you, and if you see my grandfather, tell

* The long loose trousers (or pyjamas) of Persia. For rough work the labourer tucks them up, thus making them appear like bathing-drawers.

him so. Look for the treasure, but don't damage my house. May your health improve. A European is nowhere with an Armenian at a bargain. This"—slapping the bottle—"is *all* profit."

The Armenian left the room, and Atkins sank into a troubled sleep. Atkins woke from his fitful slumbers several times, and whether it was the effect of the Armenian's story, or his opiate draught, or the two combined, his mind seemed to wander around and about the lost money. "Thirty-five thousand tomans!" a voice seemed continually to whisper in his ear; "at even the present exchange, fourteen thousand pounds—fourteen thousand pounds for one bottle of brandy, profit *exactly* thirteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds, thirteen and sixpence." And then came a sort of insane desire to calculate the exact percentage of profit. "A bargain is a bargain. *You* didn't suggest it."

Here Atkins seemed to see a dim light in the darkest corner of his, by this time, dark drawing-room. "Thirteen thousand five hundred pounds, say, calculating loss on remittance home, invested say at five per cent., gives six hundred and seventy-five pounds a year." Here Atkins began to calculate the amount of income-tax, and Atkins's head began to ache. He opened his eyes; the light in the corner of the room seemed brighter.

He closed his eyes once more.

"I wonder if the fellow was lying? Anyhow, he has got my bottle of brandy, there's no doubt about that."

Again he heard the voice, which seemed as it were within him—a sort of involuntary whisper.

“Thirty-five thousand tomans is thirteen thousand five hundred pounds in England at five per cent, is six hundred and seventy-five pounds a year *less income-tax*. How much is that a day? One pound seventeen *nearly*, but *less income-tax*.” Atkins began to perspire. The abominable secret of the dead man seemed to hold him in its nightmare grasp.

“Where could he have hidden the money—in the house or vineyard? Certainly not the latter, for that had been trenched and trenched again, and deeply too, as is usual to protect the vines in winter. In the house then; but where?” In his mind’s eye Atkins wandered over the house. In his mind’s eye he measured the immense thickness of the walls, for in Julfa the walls are built of unbaked, sun-dried bricks. Then came the voice again, “Thirty-five thousand tomans, *et cætera et cætera*, but *less income-tax*.” Then Atkins tried to calculate the bulk of the treasure. He knew that one hundred tomans in silver occupied some sixty cubic inches. “Say three hundred and fifty bags of coin laid on the ground in a row of, say, seventy bags, and five rows of them one on top of another: a solid wall of money, six yards long, a yard high, and nine inches thick; or say a solid block of coin a yard high, a yard wide, and five feet thick.”

Atkins groaned inwardly. Why should he trouble himself as to how much it was? It was nothing to do with him. “Yes, it was. He had bought the reversion—had bought the reversion for one bottle of brandy, *less income-tax*. No”—here Atkins’s thoughts proceeded to contradict the voice—“not *less income-tax*. A solid block a yard high, a yard wide, and five

feet thick! How can he have hidden such a bulk in the house?"

Here Atkins's eyes again opened, and he saw the light brighter than ever: a strong bluish light, in fact; something seemed to glitter some six feet from the ground: Atkins thought it was the reflection of the moonlight on some mirror. For the moon had indeed risen in her full brightness as she is seen in Persia.

Mrs. Atkins, having found her William asleep, had not had the heart to wake him, and was seated noiselessly by his side. Atkins stared at the bright reflection, and as he stared he saw—yes, he distinctly saw the figure of his landlord, dressed as if for severe out-door work, his shirt-sleeves rolled high over his shoulders, his shulwar pulled up above his knees and tucked into his waistband, his thin yet muscular legs bare and stained with wet mud, and carrying over his shoulder a long-handled spade, the bright blade of which as it projected above and behind the figure's shoulder glittered in the strong rays of the full moon; but the face was strangely altered: instead of the cunning of the Armenian Zeitūn, a grand benevolence shone from the clear eyes, which streamed with tears; the figure pointed over Atkins's head with a commanding gesture in the direction of the bed-room. The sergeant stared at the strange vision, and gradually it dawned on him that though the face was very like, still it was *not* the face of his landlord: the hair was longer and quite white, so was the beard; and Atkins gazed more in astonishment than fear; and as he gazed the figure mournfully shook its head, and slowly seemed to melt away: the last traces of it that

Atkins saw were the reflection of the tears on the face and the bright surface of the polished metal of the spade. Atkins gave a gasp, the drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and half-raised from the mattress on which he had been lying, he continued to stare vacantly into the empty corner of the room.

"What is the matter, Atkins?" said his matter-of-fact little wife. "Goodness me, man, what's the matter?"

"Matter! *You* saw him, I suppose, and you ask me what's the matter."

"Saw him! I saw no one."

"The man with the spade—he stood there—there in the corner of the room. Look—the light returns, just as it was a moment ago."

"Atkins," said the young wife with a sob, "you haven't been—haven't been—drinking? What man with a spade? No man has been here. Why, it's nearly midnight, and seeing you were dozing so peacefully, I didn't like to disturb you. Yes," said she, "it's past even—five past twelve," she continued, looking at her watch.

"The light," muttered Atkins, "there is the light in the corner—it fades—it fades gradually, just as it did before."

"Of course it does, Willy: a cloud is passing over the moon."

Atkins turned to the open window at his back, and sure enough the theory of his wife accounted for the disappearance of the light: the moon was covered by a small cloud.

"You are ill, Atkins," she said, softly drawing the

native coverlet of quilted cotton over his shoulders. "No man with a spade could come in here. I'll make you a little brandy-and-water as the doctor ordered. Goodness knows, it seems like drinking money!"

The thrifty little woman put her hand into the recess for the bottle of brandy, but she groped for it in vain.

"Why, Atkins, it's gone! You *have* been at it! Where is it? I insist on knowing."

"I haven't touched it," sulkily replied Atkins; "it's not in *my* way. I shouldn't be where I am, Liz, if I had—I sold it."

"Sold it—nonsense, Will!"

"I did—I sold it—for fourteen thousand pounds."

"Atkins—Will—don't tease me! What *do* you mean?" said his wife, as she deftly replaced the dressing on his burnt fingers.

Atkins told his tale, and it made no inconsiderable impression on his wife at first, particularly when he described the appearance of the man with the spade.

"It was our old landlord, Zeitūn, grown older," he said; "and though I felt scared, I pitied him, for I saw the tears running down his face, and he looked so pitifully at me."

"Will," said his wife, "*is it all true?*"

"True?" cried the sergeant; "true? Why, do you think I made it up?" here he gave an impatient grunt.

"And about the bottle of brandy; didn't you make that up?"

"Don't be a fool, Liz; I tell you, old Zeitūn took it away with him."

"Then you really did give it him?"

"No, I didn't. I *sold* it him, as I told you."

"Then, more fool you, Will Atkins!"

Here they turned their backs to each other; gradually sleep overcame them: the watching told on the wife, the opiate on the husband; and as they were in the cool and airy room they dropped asleep as they lay, on the mattress in the soft moonlight, their lullaby the jackal's mournful cry.

When Atkins woke next day, his wife was sitting by his side. She had brought him a cup of tea, and placing a hand on his shoulder, gently roused him.

"It's late, Will. Drink the tea, it will do you good. It's lucky you're on the sick list and don't go to office: it's ten o'clock." Atkins drank his tea, but he made no reply; the fact was, he was indignant. Had he not been disbelieved? Had he not been suspected of drinking? Had he not been called a fool?

"I've something to tell you, Atkins. I'm sorry for what I said last night. I believe all you told me now, dear. Atkins, last night about midnight, our landlord, Zeitūn, fell off the roof of his house and was killed; he had been sitting there, as those Armenians do, to drink with our cook and a priest; he slipped backwards and fell on his head to the ground, a drop of twenty feet, Will, and he was killed—killed on the spot. Sarkis confessed it all to me just now. Zeitūn told him that he had bought the brandy of you; but he did not say for what, but that he got it cheap—very cheap."

"Good heavens!" said the husband; "then I was the cause of his death?"

"No, Will, not the cause. You forgive me what I

said last night, Will, don't you?" and the wife buried her head on Atkins's pillow.

"Don't think of it, Liz."

"Ah, Will, I *do* believe you now; but it wasn't Zeitūn you saw—it was his grandfather!"

"By Jove, you're right, wife!" shouted Atkins, sitting bolt upright in bed; "it must be the old man himself; but I don't want to see him any more. All this weary night long, as I turned and turned, the same miserable whisper has sounded in my ear—'Thirty-five thousand toman—a bargain *is* a bargain—you didn't suggest it.'"

"It's the draught, Will, perhaps?"

"Wife," said Atkins, clutching her hand, "*I shall never know rest again till I have found that money!* I close my eyes and see him now—his long white hair and beard, his flowing tears—I see them all now in my mind's eye. I *must* find his treasure; and I can never rest till I have discovered the dead man's secret."

"I shouldn't trouble my head about it, Will; depend on it, the draught, and the talk of the poor dead man who—we killed, Will—at least our brandy did—put it in your head."

"*He* proposed and made the bargain—'a bargain *is* a bargain,'" said the sergeant; "I didn't suggest it," said he, unconsciously echoing the words of the voice.

Atkins from that day became a changed man; even while his fingers were yet sore he restlessly pottered about the house; he measured it, he made a plan of it, he searched the roof, he searched the cellars, he searched

the granary, he probed and prodded the walls ; and all was done at night, lest the servants should suspect the presence of the treasure ; and as Atkins searched he grew thinner daily, and more and more irritable and unlike himself.

He sickened, too, with the common fever and ague of the country, and he almost determined to leave it ; but his good pay, his prospects of pension, forbad it ; besides, he was so comfortable in Ispahan ; known and respected by Persians and Armenians alike, he had attained a position in the place. Then the climate, the beautiful climate : here his wife and children thrived ; elsewhere in all Persia—at all events upon the telegraph line—there was no place like Ispahan—it was a sort of natural sanatorium ; while either up or down country, or at any other station, he could not expect his health or his family's to be what it was in his present quarters.

Atkins still continued the nightly occupations that had become almost a second nature ; he sounded and measured continually. He even descended the well by means of the stout rope, and his plucky little wife lowered a lantern to enable him to examine the sides of the well. Yes, there was the place sure enough, where the old man's treasure had first been found : a sort of doorless cupboard, with the doorposts still remaining, with room and to spare for the block of silver coin "a yard high, a yard wide, and five feet thick," as the voice seemed ever to din into his wearied ears.

This increased his activity. Atkins no longer listened to the doubts his wife often expressed to him of the truth of the Armenian's story. He had seen with his

own eyes the place where the treasure had been found—with his own eyes.

On the afternoon of the same day, Atkins sat meditating in his easy chair; he had received bad news—a telegraphic message lay on his lap.

To Sergeant Atkins, Assistant Superintendent in charge of Ispahan Office.

“You will proceed at once to Shiraz to relieve Mr. Rule, who has obtained sick-leave. “SUPERINTENDENT.”

This was the final blow to Atkins. To leave pleasant healthy Julfa for hot and unhealthy Shiraz, it meant in the eyes of the despairing sergeant death—death to his young children, death perhaps to his young wife. He began to count on his fingers the number of the staff who had died there; then the wives, then the children—and then he dozed off.

In his disturbed dreams he heard the voice again.

“Thirteen thousand five hundred pounds, say, calculating loss on remittance home, invested say at five per cent, gives six hundred and seventy-five pounds a year, less income-tax.”

Then *in his dreams* he prodded and sounded the walls, he measured, but all in vain.

“Ah,” said the worn-out man, “if the old fellow would but point out the place himself; he can’t want the money, and God knows I do, and more than ever now.”

“A bargain is a bargain,” said the voice. “You didn’t suggest it.” Once more Atkins saw, or thought he saw, the figure. It stood, the long spade across its

shoulder, looking benevolently at the sergeant; the traces of tears were gone, the figure pointed to the door of Atkins's bedroom, and it smiled—it surely smiled!

Atkins roused himself; the form of the old man had disappeared, and the sergeant was awake; the words of the voice, “A bargain is a bargain—you didn't suggest it,” rang in his ears.

Atkins had a holy dislike to chaff; the ghost was a very sore point with him; his restlessness and irritability had become apparent; the servants openly said, that Atkins Sahib was getting soft. Why bother his wife about the second visit of the ghost of the old man? No; he would keep his own council and tell no one.

There was no doubt the figure had pointed to the bedroom. Atkins slowly entered it. Had he not sounded the walls a hundred times? By the head of his bed was a cupboard that was locked, and in it hung his wife's dresses; strange to say, he had never searched that, and even now he had no thought of doing so. Had he not made that cupboard himself? Originally a small passage to the outer entrance, it had been converted into a cupboard by Atkins, for two reasons: first, because he did not like a passage into his bed-room, which was useless to him, but principally because his wife needed a cupboard to hang her dresses; and he bricked up the door into the passage and, behold, a cupboard, a most convenient dress-cupboard. Here hung Mrs. Atkins's dresses—and here shame had prevented Atkins making search. He had indeed once suggested it, but his wife had indignantly asked him “if he expected to find his Armenian friend and his

spade there?" But now Atkins, with a snort of indignation at the remembrance of his wife's remark, turned away.

"No, I've other things to do. I am under orders for Shiraz; the sooner I get my rattletraps in order the better," said he; and he hastened to communicate the bad news to his wife.

It is needless to dwell on the indignation and disgust of Mrs. Atkins. She even went so far as to say, "I wish you had found the money after all, Atkins, and then we might go home; still, it's no use crying over spilt milk." And the young wife proceeded to give orders to the servants to pack up; while Atkins himself hastened to secure a muleteer for the journey—a long journey of fourteen marches, and, being summer, that had to be done at night, to avoid the heat.

Four days afterwards all was ready; the loads of Sergeant Atkins lay in disorder in his court-yard, each pair of boxes bound together with strong ropes. All or nearly all his little household gods had been sold by auction, and Atkins and his wife were about to retire for the night prior to commencing their journey on the following day. "Have we taken everything portable, Will?"

"Yes, my dear, nothing's left but the bare walls, and perhaps the hidden money," said the sergeant with a sigh.

"Bother the money," said his practical wife, somewhat sharply. "I wish you would think of something of some use. Why, Will, you've never taken down my clothes-hooks; they will be left behind after all. Do it now, there's a dear; it won't take you a moment."

Now these clothes-hooks were special pets of Mrs. Atkins. Had she not brought them from home herself? and were they not the present of her sailor-brother? They were small brass hooks set in a band of leather some two feet long; the band had an eyelet-hole at each end, and the row of hooks were secured to the wall inside the cupboard by two nails.

"Do it now, Will; they'll be forgotten in the bustle of the start."

Nothing loth, the sergeant went into his wife's dress-cupboard; there hung the leathern band of hooks. Atkins attempted to draw the nail nearest him with a hammer—no, it was too tightly in; he then tried the other with a like want of success; grasping the strap by the middle with one hand, and placing the other open against the wall, he tugged at the broad strap with all his force—in vain; he gave another wrench; his strength was not what it was before his illness; once more he gave a wrench—the wall gave way with a crash. Atkins's arm entered it to the shoulder, and he fell forward, with an exclamation:

"Great heavens, Liz—I've found it! The dead man's secret is here!" Atkins withdrew his arm from the aperture—a square hole a foot each way; he stared into the hole.

"There he sits, Liz! There he sits!" cried the excited man. His wife, who had hurriedly joined him, looked into the cavity, but saw nothing.

There was no doubt a secret chamber constructed in the thickness of the wall existed; the entrance had been closed by a thin partition of tiles laid edge to edge and then carefully plastered. These tiles, simply

cemented by plaster-of-Paris, which is always used in Persia in lieu of mortar, were easily removed by the trembling hands of the sergeant. A narrow doorway stood exposed. Without stopping to take out the few lower bricks, the sergeant stepping over them, and followed by his wife, holding a candle, entered the little cell.

It was empty.

At the further end was a sort of platform (a common structure in store-rooms in Persia), some yard and a-half wide, the same high, and five or six feet deep.

"It was there he sat," said the serjeant; "and he seemed to beckon me."

His wife did not answer; she had placed her candlestick on the ground, and knelt in silent prayer.

The whole surface of the little room was plastered—walls, ceiling, floor and all, including the platform, with the yellow mud mixed with straw that is used for plastering both the insides and outsides of the mud-brick houses of Ispahan.

"I swear I saw him," cried the-sergeant; "he sat there—there on that platform."

"Will, dear," said his wife, "you *have* found out the dead man's secret—something tells me it is there;" she touched the platform.

Atkins hastily attacked it with his hammer; it was only of sun-dried mud-bricks plastered over; the plaster came away in huge lumps. To remove a couple of the bricks was the work of a moment, and there lay the lost treasure—in bags of one hundred toman* each! They were not rotten—those canvas bags—the dry

* A toman is the name given to ten pieces of silver, value 10*d.* each.

climate had preserved them, and they were clean and fresh as the day they were first buried.

The husband and wife counted them: three hundred and fifty bags. The tale was correct.

"Are they ours, really, Will?"

"A bargain *is* a bargain—I didn't suggest it," he seemed to answer mechanically, as he ran some of the discoloured pieces through his dusty hands. "Yes, my girl, they are honestly ours, I think."

"Had we not better ask the missionary?" she said, looking up at him through her tears.

"No, wife, we won't do that, for he would prove they were *his* at once," said the sergeant with a smile.

How the sergeant packed up his bags of coin in old insulator boxes, how he got them to Bushire, the port in the Persian Gulf, how he took furlough on reaching Shiraz, and how he never returned to Persia, having left with his wife, children, and very little luggage for England *viâ* Bombay—how he also carried to Bombay twenty-four rather heavy cases of curios packed in old insulator boxes (which he bought cheap, as condemned stores, from the Department), and how he did not take these beyond Bombay, having apparently disposed of the curios there—how he took a first-class passage P. and O. for himself, his wife and family, thence to England—and how he was apparently very flush of money for a sergeant, doesn't concern anybody.

And how, when the narrator was dining with the sergeant, now William Atkins, Esq., of Brixton Hill, London, S.W. (whose little blunders must be passed over, you know, he has been *so many* years in the East); he (W. A., Esquire) told him this story, under no sea

of secrecy—"A bargain *is* a bargain, you know—I didn't suggest it," he said. And how he showed the writer a peculiarly ugly and battered silver coin with a rough edge, which he said he had worn on his watch-chain for three years. "It's one of them," he significantly remarked. All these curious circumstances concern no one but William Atkins, Esquire, of Brixton Hill, S.W., and his charming, hospitable, and plump little wife. As to the aged Armenian with the spade, no one has seen him since William Atkins entered the hidden chamber, and discovered the Dead Man's Secret.





CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CARAVANSERAI.

Who built it—Water-cellar—We arrive—The inevitable dervish—
Our rooms are prepared—Humours of the place—The call to
prayer—Off again.

AFTER a march of some four-and-twenty miles we come upon the caravanserai. To European eyes it seems more like a fortress than a refuge for travellers. At each corner of the huge square stone building is a round tower, loopholed at the top. The crenellated wall is also loopholed at regular intervals. At either side of the huge gate are similar towers; above the doorway is an incised inscription, beautifully cut, which states that "Shah Abbas the Great built this caravanserai and dedicated it to the use of travellers, in the name of God and the prophet Mahommed." There is plenty of accommodation in the caravanserai, for on a pinch it can house and shelter comfortably two thousand men. Close to the caravanserai is the *ab ambar*, or covered reservoir. It is supplied from a *kannât* or underground channel that has been excavated, at times at a depth of many feet for some miles; it is always full; the surplus water runs off in a tiny brooklet, the stone dome that covers the reservoir keeps it cool. Unfortunately, these

water-cellars are a favourite place for hiding the bodies of murdered travellers.

There is no other building of any kind within a circle of twenty-four miles of our caravanserai. No food for man can be obtained there. Perhaps, in quiet times, the doorkeeper may have barley and chaff for the horses for sale, and a little fire-wood or even charcoal. But these things cannot be depended on.

We have sighted our halting-place some three miles on at a turn of the road—that road that was never made or repaired, but that centuries of traffic have marked out. Our horses, directly they see the place, prick up their ears and, neighing, mend their pace. The lagging mules no longer need the awful curses of the charwardars (muleteers), nor the frequent application of the cruel chain-whip. The leader of the caravan, always a horse (not a mule), quickens his pace, proudly jangling his bells and tossing his gaily-bedizened head, which is decked with woollen and leather ornaments and a scarlet headstall, on which are sewn many rows of cowries. The muleteers begin to sing, the servants to smile. The cook urges his mule to a canter, and, amid much clanking of pots, hurries on to prepare his master's dinner. He will supply a good dinner of, perhaps, four courses and a sweet, his kitchen being four bricks in the corner of the stable.

As we enter the frowning gateway—which is very similar to that of the stage baronial castle, and at times the size of old Temple Bar—a dervish humbly presents a flower, an unripe plum, or a blade of grass. Nearly naked, his long hair hanging unkempt about his shoulders, his eyes sparkling with hope and the

combined effects of bhang and religious meditation, a panther-skin over his shoulders and brandishing a spiked club, the mendicant looks sufficiently formidable. "Ya hakk!"* ("Oh my *right!*") he cries, as he asks for alms. A few coppers satisfy him, and he magnificently deigns to indicate the cells chosen by our servants.

Around the square enclosed by the four sides of the caravanserai are forty-eight deep arches of heavy stonework. In each archway are piled the impedimenta of its tenants: their road-kits, their bales, their panniers, their merchandise. Separate piles of boxes and bales flung down in the spacious courtyard have formed the loads of several hundred mules, of perhaps a dozen different caravans; the mules are away grazing around the caravanserai. Our servants have taken possession of three of the archways. No man demands hire of them, no man says them nay. First come first served, such is caravanserai rule. From one of the archways come clouds of dust: the doorkeeper is preparing it for our reception. At the back of each recess is a doorway (a hole in the wall) some four feet by three. This leads to a windowless room of stonework, which has a fireplace and perhaps a chimney—nothing more. The walls are immensely thick. The place is cool in summer, warm in winter; the walls and domed roof are black with the smoke of ages. Behind these rooms runs the stabling—stabling for a thousand animals.

As the mules enter the courtyard their loads are hurriedly slipped off and piled in a heap; the servants

* *Hakk* is also one of the names of God.

drag out the carpets, the portable beds, the bedding, the table, and the two chairs. The groom takes our horses, the table-servant hands us the fragrant kalia (or hubble-bubble); we squat on the square raised stone platform that is in the centre of the courtyard, and enjoy the finest mode of smoking in the world. The mules in a long string, each bearing his jangling bell, canter off under the care of an assistant muleteer to be watered at the rill running from the water-cellar. The place gets quieter as the caravan settles down. We see that many recesses are occupied by various families; some are poor, even beggars; some wealthy merchants; perhaps there is a prince and his suite. The accommodation is exactly the same. First come first served. No man is ejected. If you arrive too late to find a vacant room, you must sleep in the stable, on the roof, or on the platform—or buy some poor man out.

Our special recess and room have been swept and carpeted. Our chairs are set up. We partake of tea under our own special archway. In the inner room there is a remarkable transformation: in the recess stand our lighted candles; in the corners are our beds; there is our tub, of which we gladly avail ourselves; a heavy curtain over the doorless doorway secures our privacy. Tired out, we lie down for a welcome nap.

We are awakened at five by the jangling of bells and the shouts of the muleteers. The various beasts of burden are returning from pasture. In the courtyard there are rows of mules tied up to ropes pegged to the ground; each has his nose-bag. There are circles of squatting camels, all chewing at once at a heap of cut

straw. In a corner are our own horses. We see them fed and examine their backs, being old hands. The cook is toiling, all booted as he arrived, over his fire. "Dinner, sahib," announces our table-servant. The man, as is the custom in this country when travelling, bristles with arms—a long straight sword, two pistols, and a dagger. We adjourn to the welcome meal.

It is sunset—the gates are closed, the travellers drink tea together and chat in groups. An occasional neigh or squabble among the numerous beasts tells us that we are on the road. A mule breaks loose and runs amuck. He is secured; all is quiet save an occasional bell, and the constant bubble of the water-pipes. Some enthusiastic Mussulman intones the call to prayer: "In the name of God, the mighty, the merciful! There is no God but God, Mahommed is the prophet of God!" Many kneel in prayer, as many more go on with their pipes. We dine. Dinner over, we hasten to rest—a rest often broken by the incident of a loosed mule or the departure of a caravan.

At dawn we reluctantly awake to partake of tea and bread-and-butter. Lazily we mount our horses. Our caravan has left an hour or two ago. Followed by the faithful cook, the table-man, and the groom, out we ride at a solemn walk, and we bid the caravanserai farewell. We have another twenty-four or even thirty miles before us, and we await with ardour the capital hot breakfast which our paragon will give us in three hours' time upon the road, at a little stream some twelve miles off. And so ends a not unpleasant night in a Persian caravanserai.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON RIDING POST IN PERSIA.

Rate of going—Preparations—Horses arrive—The Guide—The Servant—The Start—The Journey—Falls—The Post-house.

OF the only two modes of travelling in Persia, marching with a caravan and riding post or char-pa, the latter is certainly the more enjoyable. To keep up a pace of over six miles an hour (including stoppages) for two or three hundred miles, certainly tests the determination and endurance of the traveller. The actual rate of going is probably an average of eight miles. But it must be remembered that the roads are mere tracks; that the horses are only changed every twenty to twenty-eight miles; that mountain-passes or morasses have frequently to be crossed; and that even in Persia the weather is not always fine. Rain-storms, snow-storms, and dust-storms are of frequent occurrence; and the horses are often either half-starved, full of grass, lame, broken-winded, vicious, or worn out from age or fatigue. Also, a heavy kit has to be carried. Taking the average rider at the light weight of ten stone, sixty pounds at least must be allowed for saddle, bedding, holsters, and saddle-bags. Also, the horses at each stage have to be paid for, selected, and at times

even caught. Sometimes there are no horses, and the same unfortunate animals have to be taken a second or even a third stage. And although one or even two of the horses taken may be good, the third may break down, or the servant (as is often the case) may give out from fatigue or laziness, and have to be left behind. With all these drawbacks many good journeys are done. The author has gone with horses, full of grass, as a rule, from Ispahan to Teheran—seventy farsakhs, or 262 miles (taking the farsakh as $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles)—in thirty-nine hours twenty-five minutes. This gives a continuous speed (including stoppages, sleep, &c.,) of over $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour. Of course much faster journeys than this are made when the rider is expected, or when the post-house people are extravagantly feed. The great pleasure of such rides is the excitement of attempting to beat previous records, which gives the sensation of a furious race against time. Luck, of course, has a good deal to do with the result; experience still more.

But these hard rides are only justified by emergency. They are certainly needed when there is a sick man anxiously expecting the rider at the end of his journey; or, perhaps, when each hour is taken out of a short three months' privilege leave; or even when done to catch a particular steamer, the missing which would entail a residence on the shores of the Caspian or Persian Gulf of perhaps a fortnight. However, four or even three stages a day—sixty to eighty miles—with a well-earned sleep and dinner at dusk are the usual thing, and then "chapping" is really enjoyable.

The saddle-bags have been carefully packed, strapped down, and padlocked, the kit is tightly squeezed in, for the continuous jolting in a loose fit produces unpleasant results—one's boots may work a hole in the back of one's only dress-coat, &c. Each bag has to be of the same weight, otherwise the motion of the galloping horse is impeded by a bag hanging down. Into one holster is crammed the revolver and the needful silver money and the tobacco-pouch, with perhaps a sandwich or a pot of "Liebig," and the precious paper of tea; into the other are forced a cake of soap, a sponge, a brush, and a towel, possibly a flask of cognac. The roll of tightly-strapped rugs, water-proof sheet outside, is fixed behind the tall cantle of the hussar-saddle (old pattern), which is the *char-pā* saddle *par excellence*. And now all is ready. The traveller, all booted and spurred (if a wise man, in tanned boots two sizes too big for him), sits enjoying a soft seat for the last time for some days. His solar topee, or sun-helmet, is gaily bound with a silk cheffia from Bagdad, to be used as a neck-wrap or mosquito curtain should occasion require, his pockets contain his pipe, his watch, his matches, his handkerchief, and his pocket-knife—nothing more. His friends have come to bid good-bye or to see him off. Suddenly a clatter of hoofs is heard. Three miserable-looking animals enter the courtyard. One is bestriden by a youth of evil aspect, clad in a pair of shoes, loose blue breeches, and a felt coat and hat, and armed with a big whip; in the handkerchief tied round his waist are bound an onion and a loaf of bread. This is the guide, the *shargird-char-pā* (literally, "the disciple of the post");

he will bring back the three horses from the first stage. He grins or frowns, as the traveller may or may not have been liberal on a former occasion. A present of two kerans (or 1s. 6d.) at the end of a well-done stage is liberality; the half is justice; no fee at all is the proper punishment of the lazy guide, or that monster in human form, the man who provides the tired rider with a jibber or a beast that no application of the whip can get into any other pace than a hard trot. The beau-ideal post-horse is the animal that will amble, canter, or gallop at will: as a rule, he is only seen in the dreams of the tired traveller, but he does exist.

And now one's Persian servant, if a good man, comes to the fore. He gives the best horse to his master, takes the next best himself, and reserves the trotting or lame beast for the guide. The servant's make-up is far more picturesque than his master's. A pair of immense jack-boots well greased, without spurs, are worn (for the Persian uses the cruel native sharp-edged stirrup as a spur), many knives and pistols, also a straight sword or dirk (the kammar), are *de rigueur* with the Persian road-servant. Into the servant's girdle at his back is thrust a portentous char-pā whip, the lash always six foot long, the handle only one foot, the leathern cracker at the end of the thong at least six inches. The loads are adjusted. The master mounts. He looks at his watch, so do his friends: for he will certainly be timed, till a telegram announces his having had a bad commencement, when his ride no longer interests him or any one else. All three beasts pull on the severe native bit, as with a shout and a clatter off we go. The guide leads, then comes the

servant, last the sahib; for guides will loiter, servants will lag to chatter. The position of the master in the rear precludes this. A gentle canter takes us out of the town, then we gallop. At about the half-stage—say, ten or twelve miles—the guide shouts “Nuffus!” (breath). The experienced rider has already moderated his pace to a canter or amble. This is kept up with an occasional walk over bad bits of road till three-quarters of the stage is reached, then all three settle down to business. Often the horses, used to the work and in hard training, need no incitement: often whip and spur have to be freely used; the horses begin to give out, and cease to respond to the shouts of the guide and the curses of the servant. But the chuppar-khana, or post-house, is in sight: up go the three pairs of ears; at racing pace they do the last two miles, these ponies which on starting seemed only fit for the knacker’s yard—these spavined, wind-galled, sore-backed, half-starved wretches! Twenty-four miles under the three hours by the clock! The first stage is done; the sahib lights his pipe and stretches his legs. If an old hand, he assists in the saddling, and incites the post-master to hasten. A new guide, off we go again, having given our present to our late delighted post-boy. The same gallop, canter, or amble. A strap breaks: three minutes’ halt. Crash—down comes the guide’s horse on his nose; the guide, who, like all Persians, rides very short, flies over the animal’s head; up they get, off they go, none the worse. On we go, perhaps pulling at our pipe; suddenly, as if he had been shot, down comes our horse. We are an old hand; our horse is lying in a heap, our feet are on the

ground; we sit on the prostrate animal, none the worse, save for the shake. Fall the first. We may reckon on perhaps two such falls in a journey with even good horses. Sometimes we have no falls. Sometimes no one of the three falls in a whole journey of—say, 200 miles: this is, however, very unusual. Such are the stages in fine weather: in wet, there is the additional excitement of a drenching, or in winter of snow-drifts, icicles in one's beard and moustache, and the usual perils of the road—as robbers, frost, and a bad fall. As a rule, however, in these falls no one is hurt. The author, who had the opportunity of knowing, never heard of a fracture or even a dislocation among the staff of the English Government Telegraph Department in Persia. There are the delights of the road: good horses and plenty to choose from; beautiful and varied scenery; a good record; the pipe at the stage, smoked sitting on a cool stone; and, last (and best of all), the well-earned rest (and tub) in the grimy little guest-chamber of the post-house, on the bed one has carried behind one's saddle, before the blazing brushwood fire. Each journey has its incidents, its varied excitement, its trials. Personally the writer has known nothing more enjoyable, and most men who have gone through the experience look back with pleasure on a *char-pā* ride in Persia. A luxurious bed is got by carrying an empty bag, which is filled with chaff at the halts. The secret of “chapparing” is to ride only by balance-grip.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN PERSIA.

Number of English—The Telegraphjce—His popularity—His credit
—Mode of life—Talking on the wire.

THE number of Englishmen in Persia is very limited. The natural jealousy of the Oriental is shown in the fact that the Shah specially restricted the staff of the English Government Telegraph Department to the actual number required to work the line. There is the Legation at Teheran, with some ten or a dozen Englishmen; the Consulate at Tabriz, two men; the Residency in the Persian Gulf, another half-dozen; some fifty members of the Telegraph Department scattered along the line from Teheran to Bushire; two English missionaries at Ispahan; and some three representatives of mercantile England. Of course there are the usual globe-trotters, and an occasional Indian officer or civilian. But the tourist is as yet unknown, and English influence is confined to the Legation, the Residency in the Gulf, and the English "Telegraphjces." The missionaries do good educational work at Julfa, near Ispahan, among the Armenian Christians; and one of them, who is a medical missionary, has a hospital and dispensary in the village. But the work

is purely local, and as yet no conversions from the Mahommedans have been recorded. Dr Bruce is busily engaged in translating the Bible. Life in Teheran to the members of the English Legation is much like life in Constantinople : official visits are made and returned, and there is a spasmodic attempt at gaiety at Christmas and the New Year. Ladies are at a great premium ; they are, in fact, as rare as in India in the old days. A very little stone cast into the tiny pool of European society in Teheran causes much commotion, and a storm in a tea-cup is easily produced.

In the capital itself the Englishman is of little account : the preponderating influence of Russia swamps him utterly. It is with the Englishman "down country" — the Persian Robinson Crusoe—that we are more particularly concerned. A young fellow is recruited into the Telegraph Department either as a signaller (*i.e.*, telegraphist) or, after a probationary period, as a line-inspector. The latter are usually non-commissioned officers of Royal Engineers. When the young Englishman first arrives he is a victim : a victim to his servants, to his tradesmen, and to the natives generally. To him are sold the spurious antiques, the Russian crockery, the tame foxes, the bargains in horseflesh. He buys experience more or less dearly. The Teherani loafer, his first servant, who speaks a few words of English and cannot cook, is soon discharged. An active and comparatively honest Mahomedan servant is engaged, and the "new chum" soon picks up the colloquial Persian. Having mastered this, and proved himself trustworthy, he is sent to an out-station : perhaps to a remote village, a testing-

station of the telegraph-line; perhaps to a large and fanatical Persian town in which he is the only European.

Gradually the Englishman "takes root;" he doesn't want to be moved; he "hits it off" with the Persians. The solitary makes friends—real friends, not mere acquaintances. Strange to say, these friends are often from the priesthood, the most fanatical among the Moslems. And these Oriental friends always confess that what originally attracted them to their new ally is the strange fact that an Englishman doesn't lie. In Persia, the great hotbed of lies and intrigue, a man who does not lie is indeed a phenomenon. Very soon the Englishman is invited to dinners, to marriage-feasts, even to picnics; for he is a lion, and the Leo-hunter exists even in Persia—always, however, of the male sex. Little by little the influence of the "man who tells the truth" begins to spread: disputes are referred to him; for is he not the only judge in the place who does not hunger for a bribe? An unpaid arbitrator, he "embodies the law" in many a knotty dispute. There are no fees in his court, and, the reference being by mutual consent and purely unofficial, there can be no appeal. Soon the English solitary finds himself a man of importance. He is a welcome guest at the house of the local governor, who may even return his calls. On his visiting-list are several khans, perhaps even a prince or two. Nor are these visits monotonous. Persians drop in, and smoke their own or their host's kalians (or water-pipes), and drink innumerable cups of weak sweet tea.

After some years the Englishman in Persia develops, willy-nilly, into a more than decent horseman; he

gets moderate shooting, capital coursing; he can buy a greyhound for 7s. 6d., and in Persia there is no dog-tax. Or he takes an interest in his garden, and has a pride in that unknown luxury to the Irani, green peas. Seeds from Carter's produce crops, in the irrigated ground, undreamt of even by enthusiastic advertisers. Of course the Englishman has a horse; if a line-inspector, two are provided for him by the Department. In any case he can always borrow or hire, and for £8 he can buy a serviceable hack. Is not horse-keep 5d. a day, or less?

The Englishman's home is gradually improving in appearance: he has a few fine carpets, a well-made walnut chair or two from Ispahan, perhaps even a sofa, certainly a divan. He lives well; for Persia is the poor man's Paradise. When a brace of partridges can be bought for 4d., a chicken for the same money, and meat is 2d. a pound, it is little to be wondered at if the Englishman becomes somewhat of an epicure. Even the servants become humble friends. A Persian servant is apt to consider his master as *in loco parentis*. His master is his natural protector: no one may bully him but that master; that master must be robbed by no one but himself. This last theory is a point of honour with all Persian servants. As a rule, the good servant never leaves a good master. But in the case of the Englishman this must happen sometimes, as he is subject to transference to another station. And such transfer is, as a rule, most unpleasant to him. He has become one of the local magnates—a sort of grey-beard, as the Persians say. Should he feel inclined to sell a bill, the local bankers would honour it to a very

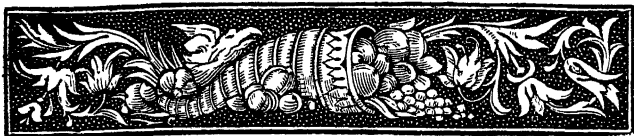
heavy amount. This fact is known to the Englishman, and appreciated by him as the really strongest proof of the value of his reputation. He, as a rule, desires not to be removed; the place—perhaps a large town, perhaps a few straggling huts—has become dear to him. He has taken root.

There is one deprivation: he has no female society. Persian ladies he does not see, save when consulted professionally; for in Persian eyes all Europeans are doctors. But he contrives to do without the ladies. This modern monk rather avoids them than otherwise; and it is perhaps as well, for it was an intrigue with a Persian woman that led to the massacre of the Russian Legation at Teheran, under M. Grebaidieff, many years ago. Only one man escaped, and he was hidden in an oven. Happily Englishmen in Persia have as yet steered clear of this very dangerous complication; for in Persia husbands are jealous, and the dagger and the poisoned cup no fictions—nor, indeed, is their use uncommon.

The solitude to which the young Englishman is subjected is mitigated considerably by his being able to talk to his fellow *employés* in Persia on the wire. He may even at times speak with London. And thus men who have never seen each other become more than acquaintances. By this means the man is not really dead to the world; on the contrary, he has the latest intelligence, for he can read off the public news as it passes through his instrument. On the Derby-day he knows the exact time that the winner's name will arrive, and patiently awaits it in his little office. The life described is the life of the signaller. The

line-inspector's is of the same character, save that his time is passed mostly in the open air. On horseback, in all weathers, day or night, summer or winter, the line-inspector has to look after the safety of the great artery that runs from England's heart to India. At any interruption, or even fault, he has to start at once and, over a section of, say, seventy miles, remedy the defect. It is needless to say that the line-inspector's life is one of some excitement. It is easy to understand that he feels a certain amount of honest pride when he returns from one of these sudden journeys able to report to his superintendent "Lines all right." Who will grudge to the telegraph *employés* in Persia their well-earned pensions after a service of five-and-twenty years?





CHAPTER XXXV.

PROGRESS IN PERSIA IN 1886.

The Persian fleet—The *Persepolis*—The *Susa*—A palace burnt—Russians in Teheran—Foreigners—The Theatre—The first Actress—The Shah at the Play—Diculafoy and party—A false famine—The Jews and the fez—Strange edicts.

THE wave of civilization is gradually sweeping over Persia, and soon the Persian, of the Capital at least, will more resemble the Levantine of Constantinople, or rather Pera, than the hospitable and amusing bigot that he was a very few years ago. When the Shah first went to England, although Persia boasted a Lord High Admiral or Derya Beg (lit. Lord of the Sea), her fleet consisted of one poor hundred-ton paddle yacht, which generally lay off Baku, on the Caspian. So ill found was she that when the King of Kings started in a Russian steamer, it was found impossible to put her engines in motion; and her commander, a grandee in a shawl coat and big black beard, trembled lest the Persian universal remedy of "stick" should be applied to his reluctant soles. But things are changed; now there is a so-called Persian fleet. The steamship *Persepolis* is at anchor off Bushire, in the Persian Gulf, and the steamship *Susa*, a small river-steamer, is lying

off Muhamrah. The German crew of the *Persepolis* all left her on January 1, and returned to Hamburg. The Shah paid rather dearly for the two steamers, and they do no work. Of course they are of no use whatever, save to create complications in the Gulf. They cost £3,500 a year to keep up. Still, there is this fleet, and the *Persepolis* is a fine vessel, carrying four Krupp guns. In 1883 the son of the Persian Minister of Telegraphs was sent to Europe by the Shah to ascertain where and for how much a man-of-war could be constructed. The envoy had been educated in Germany, and very naturally addressed himself to a German firm. Negotiations went on for a year, for all Persians take a long time to bargain; in fact, the Shah would not have been satisfied had a shorter period elapsed. The ship, commenced in 1884, was finished in January, 1885. Then came the usual Oriental money hitches, but after five months the *Persepolis* sailed for Persia. She is 600 tons register, carries four small steel Krupp guns, and can steam eight to nine knots an hour. As cargo, among the usual miscellaneous notions for the use of the Shah and his harem, she carried one useful thing—a small river-steamer, the *Susa*. This little boat was in sections, and the *Persepolis* had to first go to Muhamrah, at the mouth of the Karun river, to put the *Susa* together. This was successfully done, but it is now found that the engines are hardly strong enough to enable the *Susa* to stem the strong current of the Karun. This is unfortunate, as it was for this very important navigation that she was specially constructed, the Karun river forming the new route to the north-west

of Persia for our Manchester goods, &c. Land carriage is expensive, and Russia absorbs the trade of the north and the capital. The Karun route was the panacea. Last September the *Persepolis* anchored off Bushire in the Persian Gulf, where she has been at anchor ever since. Her bottom is covered with corals and shells, and probably her screw is hard and fast. The *Susa* is also idle at Muhamrah. The original German crew of the *Persepolis* left at the beginning of the year; all the officers have resigned, and some have left already; the captain, a German, died lately. The *Persepolis* will probably lie at anchor in charge of a few Persian servants till she is burnt in some orgie, or founders in the monsoon time. Thus £30,000, which was the mere cost of the two ships, is allowed to melt away. We have thus heard of the beginning of the Persian fleet, and the end is not far distant. Much might be done with the *Persepolis*, even as a trader in the Persian Gulf. This was the original intention, that, when not engaged in such warlike operations as the bombardment of a refractory fishing-village, or the intimidation of some local governor in the Persian Gulf who was behindhand with his revenue, this solitary Persian war vessel should carry freight of dates or pilgrims, according to season. With European officers and a crew of hardy Arab sailors of the Gulf, the *Persepolis* might certainly have even paid her way; but now the only living things at work on her are the barnacles.

The Zil-es-Sultan, the King's eldest son, and probably his ultimate successor, has had the misfortune to have a large portion of his magnificent palace in

Teheran burned down. Fires in Persia are extremely rare. However, the Prince has built another fine palace outside of Teheran, and has just bought many acres of waste ground which he purposes to convert into a large ornamental park for his son, the young Jellal-u-dowlet.

The Russian element in Teheran is very strong. The "unclean beast" was long tabooed in Persia, save in the stables of the great, where one was generally kept, nominally because "his breath was good for the horses," really to turn the litter with his busy snout. These solitary pigs never left the stable so long as a horse was in it. They were of the wild breed, caught young, and showed intense affection for the horses. When all the horses left "piggy" turned out too, and would march at times several hundred miles with the friends of his infancy. Now, however, genuine porkers may be seen about some of the streets of Teheran, running loose and scavenging just as they do in the Russian villages.

Numerous Europeans have visited the Persian capital lately, probably attracted by possible complications. Then a sewing-machine company has set up a dépôt, with many machines. The company presented a magnificent plated machine to the Shah, but as a seamstress works there for fivepence a day and feeds herself, sewing-machines are not, perhaps, much wanted as yet. Many civilians and commercial men have passed through; but as there is no real way to recover debts in Persia, these latter will mostly have their labour for their pains. Consuls, not Armenian or Persian agents, are what the English merchants want, and they are no

gratified; consequently trade with Persia, from England at least, is not large. On the other hand, a Russian or German trader finds no difficulty; his debts are recovered. The German Minister has certainly protected his subjects to some purpose, and portraits of the German Emperor and family, Bismarck, Moltke, &c., are seen everywhere. Even their statues are getting plentiful. Nearly every matchbox has the Prussian effigy on it. In fact, in the race for trade the Germans are running the Russians hard.

A young Frenchwoman has arrived who teaches music, giving piano lessons. The Naib-u-Sultaneh, the King's third son, has also his pianiste. The case of the Jews in Persia, too, seems likely to be bettered; a Hebrew dentist has arrived, a physician, and a chemist; Dr. Albu, also a Jew, is now professor of medicine at the Royal College.

But the most striking innovation is the introduction of the theatre. There is now a real live actress in Teheran. It is true that she is the wife of a German clockmaker, and that she does not know a word of Persian; but she played in a Persian piece, by a Persian author—save the mark! He did not tell the Persians that his drama was "*L'Ours et le Pacha*" of Scribe, well known on the English stage, having been previously translated, adapted, or stolen by us years ago. The artiste learned the part by heart quite mechanically. The acting was beneath contempt. Still, the lady has the honour of being the first actress seen on the Persian boards. Women's parts in Persian plays are sustained by boys. After the great effort of the evening, some amateurs among the 'Telegraph staff

gave a negro entertainment which lasted six minutes. The whole performance took only forty-five minutes. The seats were five and ten shillings each, boxes from £2. There were four performances, for the nominal benefit of the poor of Teheran. Total receipts, £100; but the expenses were £280, and the French band-master who started the matter was out of pocket the difference. Now the Persians say, "Where is the money for the poor?" The Shah was present *incog.* at the second representation. It is said that he was amused. He sat hidden from the audience behind a window; in the middle of the performance he broke one of the window-panes so as to be able to see and hear better.

M. Dieulafoy and his party have returned from their successful operations at Susa. They have discovered numerous pieces of ancient sculpture, and many cylinders with bi-lingual inscriptions. They were much annoyed by the Persian local authorities, who attempted to incite the Arab tribes against them. M. Dieulafoy was an able and energetic man, as were his assistants, MM. Babin and Houssaye. But the soul of the party was Mdme. Dieulafoy; she was everywhere, and always ready for any work. She was an able photographer, and had artistic talent of no mean order. Finding that female European costume excited remark, Mdme. Dieulafoy renounced it and donned man's attire. The Persians called her "Dieulafoy's young man." The French man-of-war *Sané* took the party off, after waiting for them forty days at Bushire in the Persian Gulf. It then went up the mouth of the Shutt ul Arab, to remove the sculptures, &c. France has now thoroughly

explored and ransacked Susa; Germany has recently done all there was to do at Persepolis; many years ago England did something also at Susa. The party consisted of Sir W. F. Williams, of Kars, Loftus, Churchill, &c. It is now England's turn again. There are many other places of interest, and valuable additions to archæology and the knowledge of ancient languages which might be made, while many of the moot points of history may possibly be finally set at rest. England has made no researches in Persia since Sir Henry Rawlinson visited the rock carvings at Besitum. Ecbatana (Hamadan) has never been explored, save by the natives who dig for, and find, numerous coins and archaic jewellery.

The Persian authorities have again prohibited the export of grain from the Persian Gulf, pretending that the crop in the great province of Fars has failed. This is not the case; the harvest, without being a bountiful one, has been quite up to the average. But the great grain-owners of Fars are the Governor and his family, the Kawamis; and these people raise the cry of famine to enrich themselves by selling grain at high prices. Enormous diminutions from mice and dry-rot take place in the stocks of grain, and as the Persian Government collects much of its taxes in kind, it is the eventual loser. What rots and what is mice-eaten, at least, might have been exported; for, as things are, the Government loses the export dues, which are high. The land-carriage is lost to the muleteer. Mule-hire, the ordinary, nay, only mode of carriage for goods, becomes prohibitive, trade is paralysed, and "poor Persia" suffers. Of course a

semi-famine is caused by this state of things; a few people die. Then comes the radical cure in the shape of a Royal edict. The great grain-holders, being privately forewarned, sell to others. There is a good deal of bankruptcy among the merchants. The price of bread in the bazaar reaches its usual figure, and things are as they were before this speculators' famine. Happily, there is no fear of a real famine in Persia. When that did occur some years ago there was not a drop of rain for three years; the famine was an actual one, and the horrors that occurred were indescribable. Depression of trade is much felt in Persia. There is a general want of confidence. Credit is dead. Some European firms go on at a loss to themselves to save appearances.

The new Governor of Bushire, on the second day after his arrival, gave orders that the Jews, of whom there are 200 males in Bushire, should all wear the red Turkish fez, in lieu of the cool and comfortable turban. The Jews refused to obey, for the fierce sun of Bushire, in the hot Persian Gulf, and the scarlet fez, would probably have quickly reduced their number by sunstroke. The unhappy Jews were given a month's grace, to get accustomed to the fez. After the month of grace any Jew wearing a turban would have to pay 100 tomauns (£39) as a fine. Happily for the Jews, the Governor was disgraced and removed before the month was over. The Jews still wear their turbans, and rejoice greatly, as well they may. The Governor was one Fazl Ali Khan, a nephew of the Kawamis. He is the husband of one of the cast-off wives of the Royal seraglio, a lady who has ceased to please. These

unfortunates are not bowstrung, or sewn up in a sack, as in Turkey. They are simply married to a provincial governor, and told to go into residence at once.

Truly the government of the Shah is a paternal one. The women of Teheran went a few weeks ago in a body to the King's palace, and complained that the coffee-shops (of which an extraordinary number have been opened lately) took away their husbands from their work and their home duties, causing them to spend all their money in drink and smoke. After all, the drink was merely tea and coffee. The Shah sympathised with the wives of Teheran. He acted promptly, and, as the Commander of the Faithful is said to have done under similar circumstances, he ordered that all the coffee-houses in the capital were to be closed. Closed they were; closed they remain. The next day the Royal edict went forth that all the provincial coffee-houses were to be closed. They, too, are all shut up. Fancy such an order in a civilised country; but in Persia nobody grumbles. The women, of course, are in ecstasies; but the haunters of coffee-houses, who form by far the larger proportion of the male sex in the large Persian towns, are in despair.



GLOSSARY OF PERSIAN WORDS.

HAVING THE TRANSLITERATION OF THE ORIENTALIST JOHNSON AFFIXED IN PARENTHESES TO MOST WORDS. WHERE NO PARENTHESES OCCUR, I HAVE EMPLOYED THE SAME WAY OF WRITING THE WORD AS THAT SCHOLAR.

ABBA (*abā*). A long, sleeveless, square-cut coat, generally of camel's-hair—much affected by priests.

AKD. A marriage contract, or ceremony.

AKDI (*akdah*). A married woman.

AKKAS (*'akhās*). A portrait-painter—(modern) a photographer.

ALKALŪK (*alkhālūk*). An inner (quilted) tunic.

AMÁN (*amān*). Mercy!

AMĀNAT. A deposit.

ANDAZEH (*andūzah*). Measure—*i e.* standard height in horses—14 hands.

ANDERŪN (*andarūn*). The harem.

ARJEEN (*arjan* or *arjīn*). A tough wood, of which bludgeons are made: probably the wild bitter almond.

BARŪD-KHŪB (*bārūd-kōb*). A gunpowder-maker—a pyrotechnist.

BAST. Sanctuary.

BENJ (*bang*). A fabulous intoxicating or anæsthetic substance; bhang, or Indian hemp.

BISMILLAH (*bismillāh*). In the name of God.

BUGGALLOW. An Arab sailing-boat, ship, or smack.

CHAR PA (*chār pā*). A mounted post—a quadruped—posting.

CHILLAW (*chulāw*). Plain boiled rice.

CHUPPAO (*chāpū*). A raid on horseback.

DAROGA (*dârûghah*). A police-magistrate.

DEEVES (*dēw* or *dēw*). Devils, genii—jinns, or djinns (*jinn*).
Demons.

DOHOL. A big drum used at weddings.

DUKKAN (*dūkān*). A shop.

FARRASH (*farāsh*). A carpet-spreader.

FARRASH-BASHI (*farāsh-bashī*). A head carpet-spreader.

FIZZINJHAN (*fizinjān*). A dish flavoured with condensed pomegranate juice and pounded walnuts.

FURDER (*fardā*). To-morrow.

FURDER INSHALLAH (*fardā insh'allah*). Please God, to-morrow.

GĦOLAM (*ghulām*). A mounted servant; lit. a slave, an irregular cavalryman.

GOOSHA-NISHEEN (*gōshah-nishīn*). A dweller (lit. sitter) in a corner.

HAKIM (*hakīm*). A physician.

HAKIM-SAHIB (*hakīm sāhib*). Mr. Doctor.

HAKK. A share—"my right" (the dervishes' cry); one of the thousand names of God.

HAMMĀM. A bath similar to the Turkish bath.

HARĀRET (*harārat*). Heat.

HATIM-TAI. A hero of romance who was the most generous of men.

HAUZ (*hawz*). A tank, generally of stone and raised above the level of the ground.

IMARAH (*imārah*). A covered bier.

INSHALLAH (*insh'allah*). Please God.

IRAN (*Irān*). Persia.

ISTAKAN. A tumbler (from the Russian *stakkan*).

JEDEED (*jadīd*). A Mussulman whose ancestors were Jews.

JELLAL-U-DOWLEH (*jallāl ad dawlat*). Glory of the government.

JERRAH (*jarrāh*). A surgeon.

JIKA (*jigha*). A jewel worn on the head by women—the Shah's hat ornament.

KABĀB or KABOB (*kabāb*). A roasted or toasted meat.

KALAMDAN (*kalamdān*). A pen-case.

- KAMMAR (*kammah*). A straight two-edged sword—a long dirk.
- KANG. The stocks—(*Chinese cangue*).
- KATL. A killing. *The Katl, the killing* (or martyrdom) of Houssein.
- KERAN (*kirân*). A silver coin, value 9*d*.
- KETKHODA (*kat-khudâ*). The head-man of a parish, or village.
- KHARKÛL (*kakûl*). A long lock of hair, left in the middle of the shaven crown, by which Mahommed is supposed to draw up the believer into Paradise.
- KHELWUT (*khalwat*). Private—a private room or court.
- KISSEHGOO (*kissah-gû*). A story-teller—an improvisatore.
- KOJA-BASHI (*kh'âjah-bâshî*). The head eunuch.
- LODAH (*lawda*). A pannier for grapes.
- LÛTI (*lûtî*). A buffoon—a scamp—a thief.
- MAST (*mâst*). Curdled milk (*Turkish*) Yaourt.
- MEHR. A settlement of money, &c., on marriage.
- MEJLIS (*majlas*). An assembly—a reception.
- MIMBAR. A pulpit.
- MIR ACHOR (*mîr-akhûr*). Master of the horse; lit. Lord of the manger.
- MODAKEL (*mudâkhl*). Illicit percentage—"cabbage."
- MOULLAH (*mullâ*). A priest—in derision, a Jew.
- MORTAZZA ALI (*Murtaza' 'Ali*). The son-in-law of Mahommed.
- MOTESSIB (*muhtasib*). An inspector of weights and measures.
- MÛM YAI (*mōmyā-i*). Bitumen, literally "mummy."
- MURSHED (*murshid*). A chief of dervishes, or of any sect or guild.
- NAZIR (*nâzir*). A steward.
- NUFFUS (*nafas*). Breath, the sacred inspiration or healing power of the dervish.
- OMAR-KOSHÛN. The killing of Omar.
- PERI (*parî*). A fairy.
- POOCH (*pûj* or *pûch*). Empty.
- ROSAH-KHANA (*rosah-khānah*). A prayer-meeting.
- RUH-BAND (*rû-band*). A veil; lit. that which is bound over.
- RÛTÛBUT (*rutûbat*). Dampness.
- RYOT (*ra-iyat*). A subject—a tiller of the earth—a villager.

SAYYID, SEYD, SYUD (*sayyid*). A descendant of Mahomme'.
 SCHAMAYÛL (*shamāyil*). The portrait of Ali or Mahommed.
 SHERBET-DAR (*sharbat-dār*). A servant who makes sherbets, ices, &c.
 SHERBET-I-BEED MISHK. Flavoured with willow bloom.
 SHERBET-I-KAND (*sharbat-i-kand*). Eau sucrée.
 SHISHT-PER (*shash-par*). A six-winged iron-headed bludgeon.
 SHUB-KOLAH (*shab-kulah*). A night-hat (or cap).
 SHULWAR (*shalwār*). Trousers—breeches—petticoats.
 SOWAR (*suuār*). A horseman.

TABÛT (*tābūt*). A coffin—a bier.
 TAJIR (*tājir*). A merchant.
 TAKHT. A throne—a bedstead—a sofa—a platform.
 TAKHT ROWAN (*takhti ravanda*). Lit. a *flowing* or *running* bed,
i.e. a horse-litter.
 TAKJAH (*tākchah*). A recess in a wall—a niche.
 TARR (*tār*). A guitar-like banjo—a viol.
 TAZIANA (*tāziyānah*). A cat-of-nine- (or fewer) tails.
 TERIAK-MALI (*tiryak-māli*). Rubbing (*i.e.* preparation) of opium.
 TOMAN (*tomān*). Ten kerans (7s. 6d.), a gold coin.

ÛSTAD-NAKOSH. A master-painter.

VAKEEL (*wakīl*). An agent.
 VALLIAD (*walī-i-Ḥahd*). The heir apparent—the crown-prince.

YABÛ (*yābū*). A pony—a common horse—a horse.
 YAGHI (*Turkish*). In revolt.
 YA HAKK. Oh, my *right* (the dervishes' cry); Oh, *the right* = oh, God.
 YASHMAK (*Turkish*). A veil.
 YEILAK (*yaylāk* or *yayla*). Summer quarters.
 YEMEEN-U-DOWLET (*yamīn-u-dowlet*). The power of the government.

ZALĀBIEH or ZALĀBI (*zalābyā*). A sweet cake or fritter, eaten in the month of Ramazan.
 ZANJIR-KHANA (*zanjir khānah*). A gaol.
 ZIL-ES-SULTAN (*Zill us Sultan*). The Shadow of the King.
 ZÛLF (*zulf*). A long love-lock—a curl.

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